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THE YEAR OF MARY;

OR,

THE TRUE SERVANT

OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF REV. M. D'ARVILLE, APOSTOLIC
PROTHONOTARY.

M. d'Arville

Edited, and in part translated, by Mrs. J. Sadlier.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY PETER F. CUNNINGHAM,
216 SOUTH THIRD STREET.
1866.

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APPROBATIONS.

WE cheerfully give our permission for the republication, by Mr. PETER F. CUNNINGHAM, of "THE YEAR OF MARY," and recommend its perusal to the Faithful.

Given at Philadelphia, this 28th day of March, A. D. 1865.

JAMES FREDERIC, *Bishop of Philadelphia.*

WE approve and recommend "THE YEAR OF MARY," published by P. F. CUNNINGHAM,

JOHN, *Archbishop of New York.*

NEW YORK, March 30, 1865.

WE willingly unite with the Ordinary of Philadelphia and the Metropolitan of New York in approving "THE YEAR OF MARY," republished by PETER F. CUNNINGHAM, of Philadelphia.

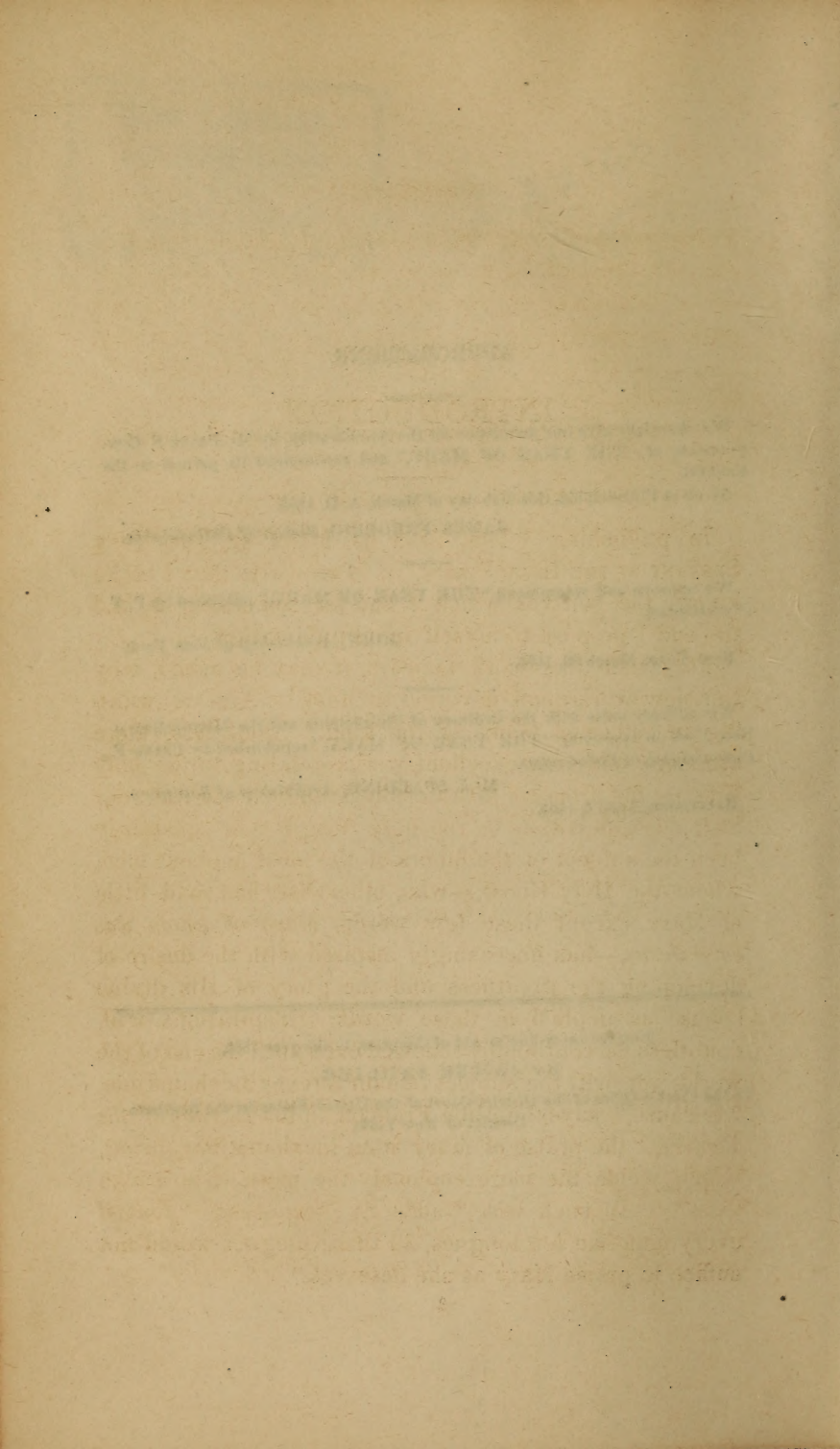
M. J. SPALDING, *Archbishop of Baltimore.*

BALTIMORE, April 6, 1865.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1865,

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INTRODUCTION.

In publishing "THE YEAR OF MARY, OR THE TRUE SERVANT OF THE HOLY VIRGIN," it is requisite that I make known the motives which I had for composing it, and the end I propose to myself in its publication.

For, when this work appears, it may be asked, why this new work upon devotion to Mary? Are we wanting in esteemed books of the kind? Doubtless, there are many and very excellent works relating to the holy Virgin; for, from the birth of Christianity even unto our own days, devotion to the holy Virgin has constantly been the subject of the labors of the most eminent men, whom the Holy Ghost,—who, otherwise, has said little of Mary, except these few words, *Mary of whom was born Jesus*,—has unceasingly inspired with the desire of developing the greatness and the glory of His divine spouse as implied in those words. Inspirations will, doubtless, be continually renewed even until the end of the world, yet will the subject remain forever inexhaustible, "Because," says the Abbé Francon, in his *Library of the Fathers*, "the praise of Mary is an inexhaustible spring, which yields the more copiously the more it is drawn from." "In such wise," adds St. Augustine, "that if every man had ten tongues, all those tongues would not suffice to praise Mary as she deserves."

Hence it is, that all the saints have wonderfully applied themselves to propagate devotion to the holy Virgin; and all that they tell us of her, proves to us how profitable it is to all men in general, and to each in particular, to co-operate in that propagation.

St. Bonaventura affirms that those who publish the praises of Mary are secure of Paradise; and Richard of St. Lawrence adds, "*Mary will not fail to honor in heaven those who shall have honored her on earth.*" And Mary herself, has she not promised that those who make her known and loved in this world, she will make happy in the next? (Prov. iv.)

"Rejoice then, oh, my soul," exclaims St. Bonaventura, in the transports of his zeal to celebrate the greatness of Mary—"rejoice, then, my soul, in that divine mother, for great blessings are prepared for those who praise her;" and as all the Holy Scriptures celebrate her praises, let us unceasingly exalt with heart and mouth that glorious protectress, to the end that she may one day introduce us into the kingdom of heaven.

Is there any thing more required to animate the zeal, I do not say of a good priest, but of any Christian, in devotion to the most holy Virgin? How happy should we esteem ourselves to be able to extend that devotion, by publishing her greatness, proclaiming her power, and exalting her mercy!

That divine Mother having vouchsafed to imbue me with that happiness from my earliest youth, ought I to neglect the thought of it in my more advanced age; or could I, without the great guilt of ingratitude, neglect to use all possible means of discharging my duty in that respect, when by a signal favor of her merciful goodness I am associated in the august priesthood of her divine Son?

Assuredly not; and I would not even if I could, so strong has always been my desire to propagate the devotion to Mary, if not by means of a work, novel in its elements, at least by means of a work unique in its kind, by the orderly arrangement of its collected materials, and the selection of its subjects: they are such as to combine solidity of substance with variety of number, yet without prejudice to the identity of object, for I have considered the most holy Virgin under all possible aspects, as well in herself as in her relations to us.

It may with truth be said, that under this point of view, the devotion to Mary really required a new work. Of that, I have been convinced by the reading of an immense number of books on the subject, in Latin, Italian, and French, from all of which, like the bee in the fields, I have culled only the flowers, thence to extract a pure honey to present all unmixed to my readers. Thus, my motives in compiling and publishing *The Year of Mary* were, first of all, my desire to increase the library of the Blessed Virgin by one work still wanting on its shelves; and in the next place, the happiness I would fain procure for myself of extending her devotion, by means of a book which should contain it in the most perfect manner, and which might be procured at a trifling expense. Such was the twofold object, to the accomplishment of which I have consecrated, for more than ten years, all the time which was not employed in the duties of the sacred ministry.

The Year of Mary being intended for congregations and religious communities formed in her honor, for the instruction and edification of all pious persons, or those who sincerely desire to become so, it was expedient,

therefore, to adopt the form best adapted to that end : that of exercises seemed to me the most suitable, and I have, therefore, chosen it.

But, before I proceed to speak of the exercises, I must give my reason for fixing them at the number of seventy-two. That is the number of the years, according to the opinion received in the Church, which the holy Virgin sojourned here on earth, as it is believed that she was sixteen at the time of the Incarnation of the Word, that she lived thirty-three years with her divine Son, and that from the death of Jesus Christ till her glorious assumption was twenty-three years more.

It is in honor of that number of years, which undoubtedly was not without a purpose in the decrees of God, that I have entitled my work *The Year of Mary*, in the hope of pleasing God and his holy Mother, by ascribing a special honor to each of those years which that incomparable Virgin passed upon the earth, and every moment of which was filled by the most admirable virtues.

To the title of *The Year of Mary*, I have added that of "*True Servant of the Holy Virgin*," because whosoever will practise all that this work presents for devotion towards this divine Mother will speedily become her true servant, by honoring her with the most perfect worship, in whatever light she may be considered. The seventy-two Exercises are distributed systematically and in order, for every Sunday and festival throughout the year, as they are solemnized in Italy, where I resided while revising my *Year of Mary*; and there our holy religion shines in all its splendor, especially at Rome, where its observances are powerfully encouraged by the illustrious example of fervent piety daily afforded by the great and holy Pontiff who fills with so much dignity

the chair of the Prince of the Apostles; and who, by the assemblage of all the virtues which are so eminently united in his august and sacred person, as well as by the wisdom of his government, exalts the glory of the holy See, and forms the happiness and the consolation of the Church of Christ.

Each of the seventy-two Exercises consists of a text from holy writ, an instruction, an example, an historical fact, a practice, and a prayer. It was proper that, in a work exclusively consecrated to the devotion to Mary, each exercise should commence with words taken from the sacred books, and that they should be applicable to her, as we find there in almost every page traits which represent her. Under some one aspect, that text relates to the instruction that follows, expressing its substance and containing its basis.

The seventy-two Instructions contained in *The Year of Mary*, all differ from each other; they are abundantly furnished with the words of holy writ, and with all such passages in the writings of the fathers of the Church as are analogous to the truth treated of. I have developed them by explanations drawn from the best authors, and accompanied them by reflections the best adapted to render the practice of each of those instructions, glorious to God, honorable to Mary, and profitable to the faithful.

The Year of Mary, treating in general of all that concerns devotion to Mary, had necessarily to detail the life of the Blessed Virgin: it is in this view that I have devoted to that marvellous development the twelve first Instructions, commencing with the Immaculate Conception, and ending with the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God.

In the remaining sixty Instructions, I have laid down the rules that should be observed in the practice of the devotion to Mary ; I have traced the characters of genuine devotion to her ; I have endeavored to express the various sentiments by which we ought to be animated towards her, when we pay our homage to her. I have detailed her privileges and her prerogatives ; I have described the sublimity of her rank, and the immensity of her greatness and her glory in heaven. I have made known, as far as in me lay, how powerful is her protection, her mercy how boundless, her succor how prompt, her mediation how effectual, her clemency, her compassion, and her charity, how diffusive. I have then treated of the various devotions towards the holy Virgin that have been approved by the Church, like that of the Scapular, of the Rosary, of the Sacred Heart of Mary, &c., in order to nourish the piety of the faithful, and to reanimate, by every means, their confidence in that good mother.

I have allotted a special exercise to each of the festivals of Mary, and the five articles of which each of those exercises consists are adapted to the object of the feast.

Each instruction is followed by an example or historical fact. There are, therefore, seventy-two of these, all different, all taken from the best sources, relating to all conditions and states, and to every situation in which man may be placed here on earth.

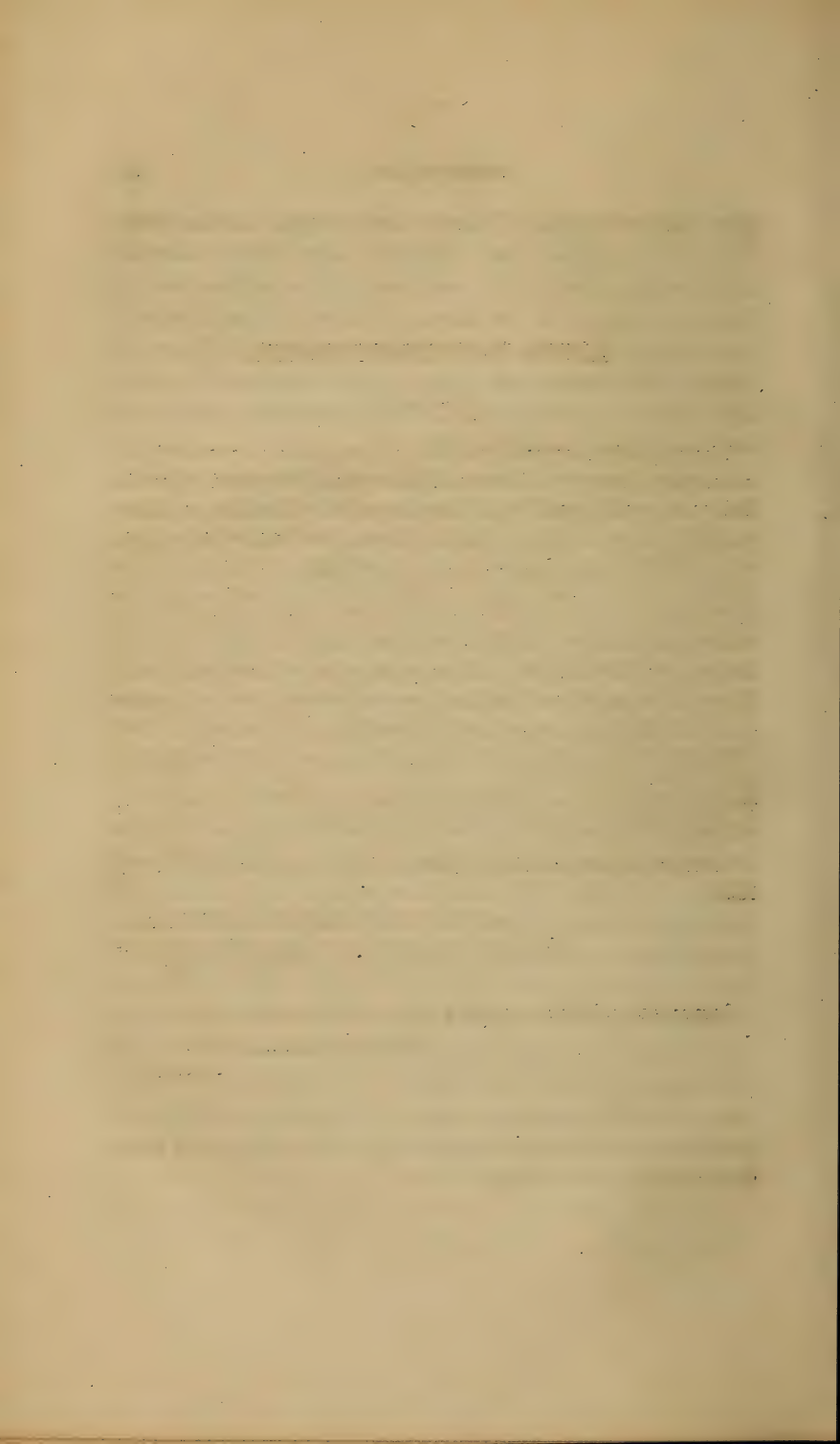
The examples are the result of the instruction which precedes them, and they openly attest that all that has been affirmed of the power, the goodness, and the mercy of the holy Virgin, is verified by facts in all the circumstances in which she has confidently been appealed to.

The practices in honor of Mary, which I have placed

after the examples, all have their origin in the love which she inspires, and they are admirably calculated to sustain that love ; they have all been observed by the saints, or by the servants of Mary, whose names I have cited. A small Italian work, entitled *I Cuore di Maria*, has furnished me with a great number of them ; others I have found in the *Lives of the Saints*, or in the most esteemed books of piety.

Finally, each exercise is terminated by a prayer taken from the writings of the Fathers of the Church, or composed by some saint or devout servant of Mary, to whom they are all addressed ; and establishing a worship of praise in her honor, they prove that, from the birth of Christianity to our own days, that same worship forms a chain, the first link of which is attached to the throne of Mary in heaven, and the last is in the hand of whomsoever invokes her with loving confidence on earth.

Such is the plan which I have followed in *The Year of Mary*, and such are the materials of which it consists. In the development of it which I have made, and which I considered essential in order to give a general idea of this book, I have indicated the motive of my labor, and the object of its publication. As both proceed from an ardent desire to spread abroad and encourage more and more the devotion to the holy Virgin, the practice of which is so glorious to God and so useful to our neighbor, I confidently hope that for those two ends the Lord will bless my work, that Mary will accept it, and that the public will cordially receive it ; this is the only reward I aimed at while composing it, the only one I now desire when publishing it.



APPROBATION OF ROME.

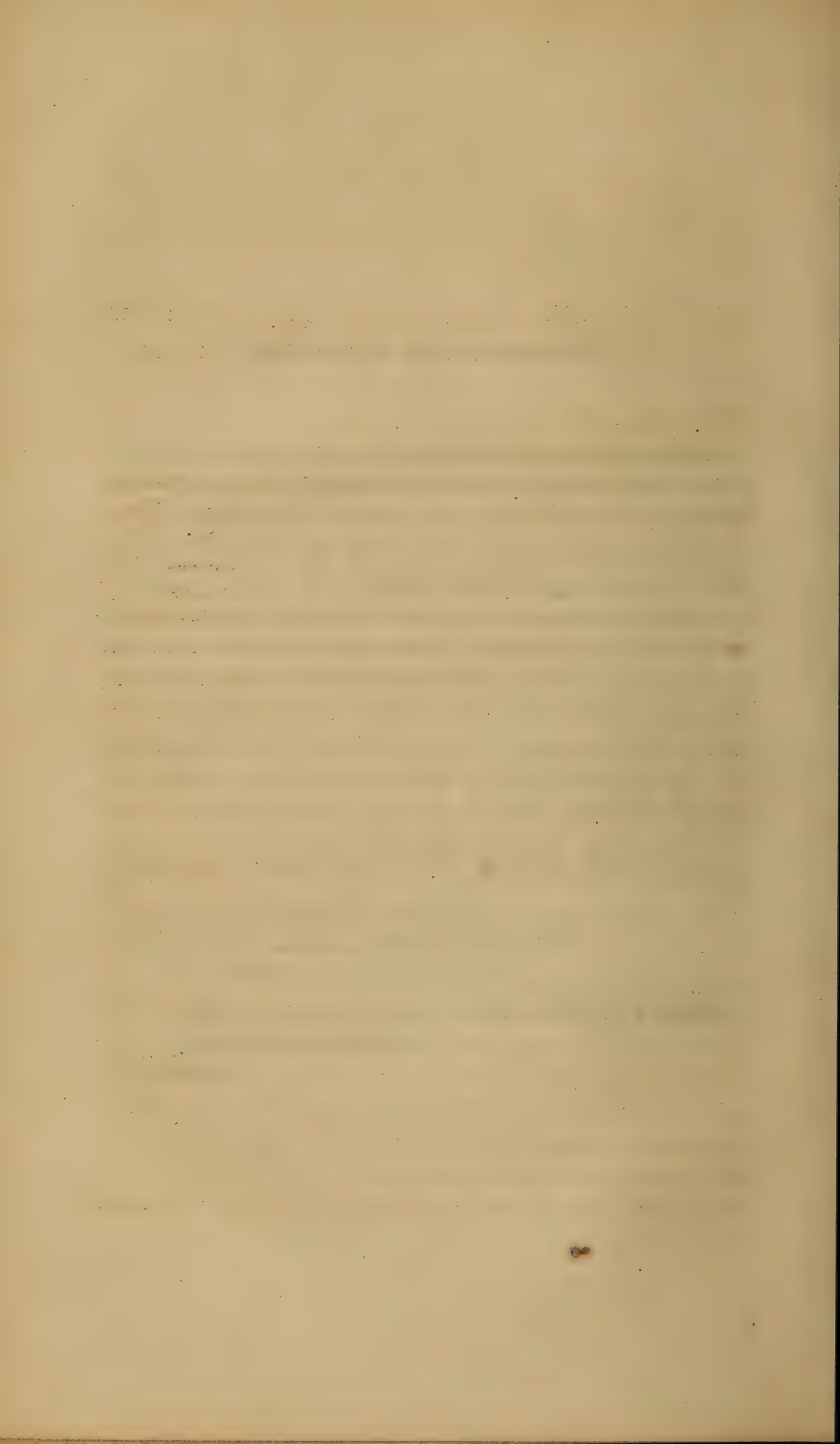
I have gladly received, and with all possible care executed, the order given me by the Reverend Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace, to read attentively a work entitled "*The Year of Mary, or, The True Servant of the Holy Virgin,*" and to give my opinion upon its contents. I think, then, that not only does the said work contain nothing hostile to the doctrine of the Church, but that, on the contrary, every thing in it is perfectly conformable to the true principles of the Catholic faith, and well adapted to nourish the piety of the faithful; the more especially because the chief object of its pious author has been to increase more and more their devotion to the Mother of God, an object which his rare learning and the clearness which prevails in his work warrant him in confidently hoping to attain; and I also am convinced that this excellent work is, in every respect, worthy to be printed.

Given at Rome, at *Santa Maria Della Minerva*, July 26th, 1832.

ANGELUS VICENTIUS MODENA,
Of the Order of Preachers, Professor of Theology in the
University of Rome, and Theological Censor.

Compared with the original at Nice, 27th January, 1833.

MIGNON PHILIPPUS,
Secretary.



GREGORY XVI., POPE, TO OUR DEAR SON, MENGHI
D'ARVILLE APOSTOLIC PROTHONOTARY, AT MARITIME NICE.

VERY DEAR SON:

Health and Apostolic Benediction.

We have received, our dear son, together with your very respectful letter, a copy of the work which you have published in the French language, under the title of "*The Year of Mary, or The True Servant of the Holy Virgin.*"

Constantly engaged in the most important occupations, we have not as yet been able to read that work, but we are well convinced that, versed as you are in the subject you treat, every thing in your work is perfectly adapted to increase true devotion to the Holy Virgin, and to inspire the most tender confidence in her. Moreover, your letter, abounding as it does in the finest sentiments of religion, fully confirms us in that conviction; and we perceive that you had formed, and have since executed, the pious design of distributing a great number of copies of that work, that an equally great number of Masses should be offered to God, in honor of his Divine Mother under her title of *Mater Dolorosa*, for the happy issue of our Apostolic labors.

Sensible of your generous devotion in our regard, we, as is but just, return you our sincere thanks, and we cannot too highly praise the respect with which you are penetrated for the Chair of the First of the Apostles, and the lively ardor you manifest towards the august Queen of Heaven. We also invoke her in our humble and fervent prayers, that Mother of Mercy, and we conjure her, our very dear son, that she will deign to take you

under her potent protection and cover you with all celestial favors. Finally, our dear son, as a pledge of all those blessings, and as a striking testimony of our paternal good-will towards you, we, with our whole heart, bestow upon you our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at St. Peter's, at Rome, 16th April, 1834, and the 4th of our Pontificate.

CAROLUS VIZZARDELLI,

Latin Secretary of our Holy Father, the Pope.

THE AUTHOR'S PETITION TO THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOD.

MY AUGUST AND SOVEREIGN MISTRESS :

Thou knowest that my most ardent wish, the only one I have constantly formed, has been to procure thy glory, which, after that of thy divine Son, was always the object dearest to my heart ; and it is to follow the movement and the impulse of a desire so sweet and so just, that thou hast for years long inspired me with the thought of leaving after me a monument of the infinite gratitude which I owe to thy mercies, by composing some work in thine honor. I have done so, my divine Mother, and humbly prostrate at thy feet, I come to-day* to offer it to thee, however unworthy I am of presenting it. Deign to receive it as thy property, and to accept it as a feeble testimony of the sentiments of respect, confidence, and love with which thou hast penetrated me for thee ever since my earliest childhood.

Under this first relation, and under so many others, my good Mother, I undoubtedly owe thee much, and nevertheless I come again to increase my debt, by entreating thee to grant me the grace of ever loving thee more and more till my last sigh ; grant that I may yield it up in final perseverance, pronouncing thy holy name and that of thine adorable Son Jesus.

* July 2d, 1831.

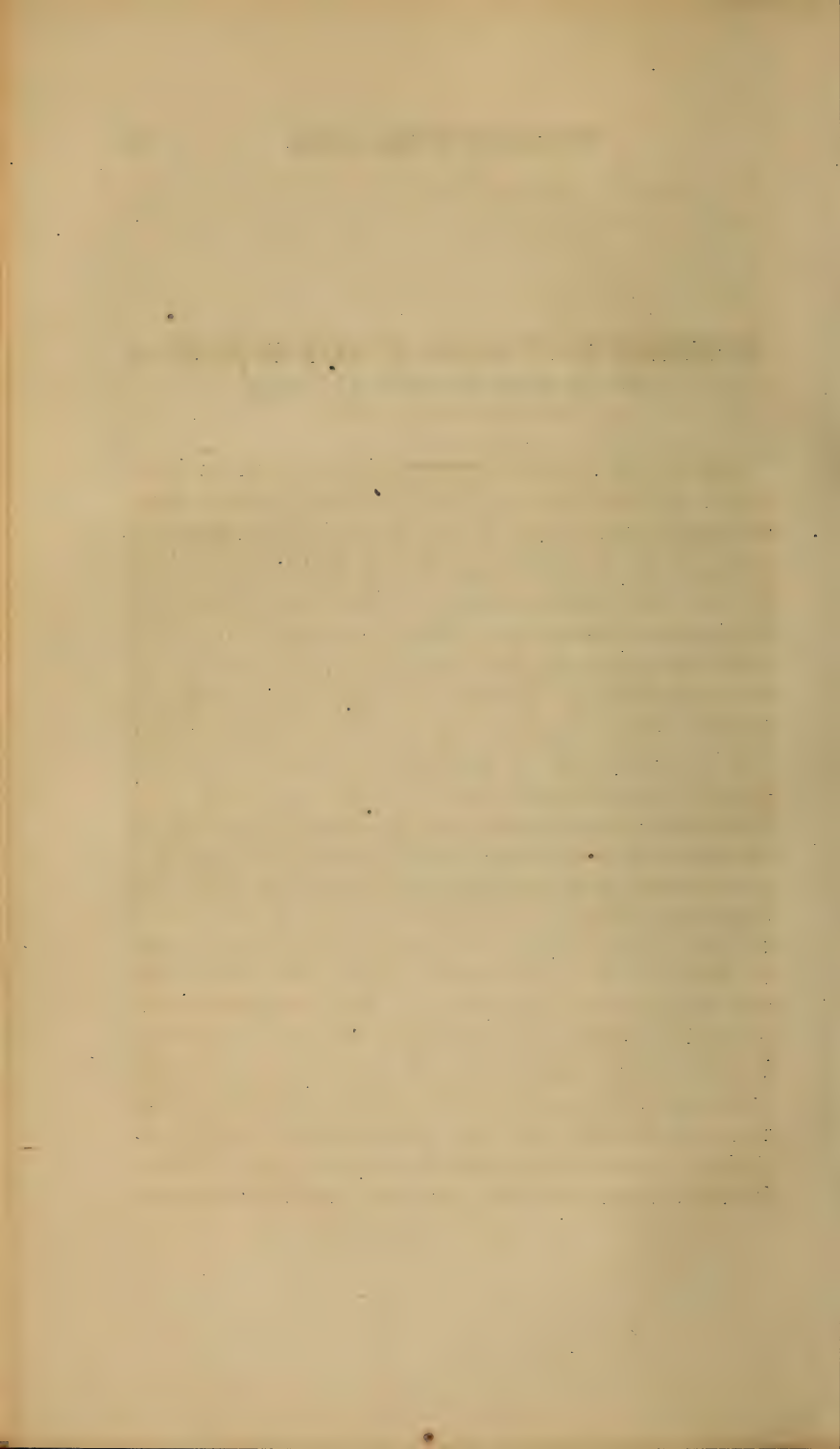
That grace, O Mary, will be the most signal of all I shall have received from thee during the whole course of my life, and will crown thy goodness to me. I expect it, then, from thine inexhaustible charity, and I will not cease to ask it of thee until I have obtained it.

I further ask of thee, my tender Mother, to defend this book from the attacks of thine enemies, and to propagate it for thy glory. I beseech thee to bless its author, to protect its readers, to favor its protectors, and to sanctify all those who shall make use of it. They shall all have the greatest part in *my* prayers, and I desire that they themselves may recommend me specially to thee in *theirs*, that we may all become saints, so that, having had the happiness of honoring and faithfully serving thee here on earth, we may desire to see thee one day in heaven, together occupied in praising thee and singing eternally the effects of thy merciful protection.

Such, then, Mary, O my Mother, O my only hope after God, such is the only wish formed, or to be formed, with thy assistance, till his latest breath, by the most unworthy, doubtless, but at least one of the most zealous and most devoted of thy servants; he will die content with the thought that even after his death he may, perhaps, contribute to make thee more known, and to augment the devotion which is so legitimately due to thee!

**Declaration of the Author of the Vear of Mary
or the True Servant of Mary.**

Conformably to the decree of Pope Urban VIII, and in obedience to it, I declare that the revelations, graces, and miraculous facts, as well as the name of Saint or Blessed given to the servants of God not yet canonized, have but a purely human authority, except in what has been confirmed by the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, and by the Holy See, to whose judgment I submit my person and my writings, and whose devoted, respectful, and all-obedient son it shall ever be my honor and pride to be, believing all it ordains to be believed, and wishing to teach only what it teaches, because it is the seat of holy doctrine and the centre of Catholic unity and faith.



PREFACE TO THE FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

THE reasons for publishing yet another book on devotion to the holy Mother of God have been, I would hope, satisfactorily explained by the author, but it may not be amiss for me to add another short *preface* relating to my share of the labor, and some other matters that may possibly interest the reader. In the first place, I am not the actual translator of *The Year of Mary*, although it was a task which I had proposed to myself for the last two or three years, being most desirous of seeing so admirable and so practical a work on the Blessed Virgin translated into our far-spreading English tongue. Circumstances unnecessary here to mention prevented me from doing so, and the work was given to a gentleman much in need of employment, and thoroughly understanding both the French and English languages, with the special understanding that I was to revise and correct, if need were of doing so. I found, on examination, that the translation was an exceedingly *free* one, and, consequently, departed in numberless instances from the author's meaning. In fact, I found that the work of correction and revision was more laborious than the translation would have been to one so familiar with the sublime subject dearest to Catholic hearts, the praises of our ever-blessed Mother. Portions of the text had been here and there omitted,

and slight interpolations introduced, which would have marred the simplicity proper to a work of the kind, and to the grandeur of the subject.

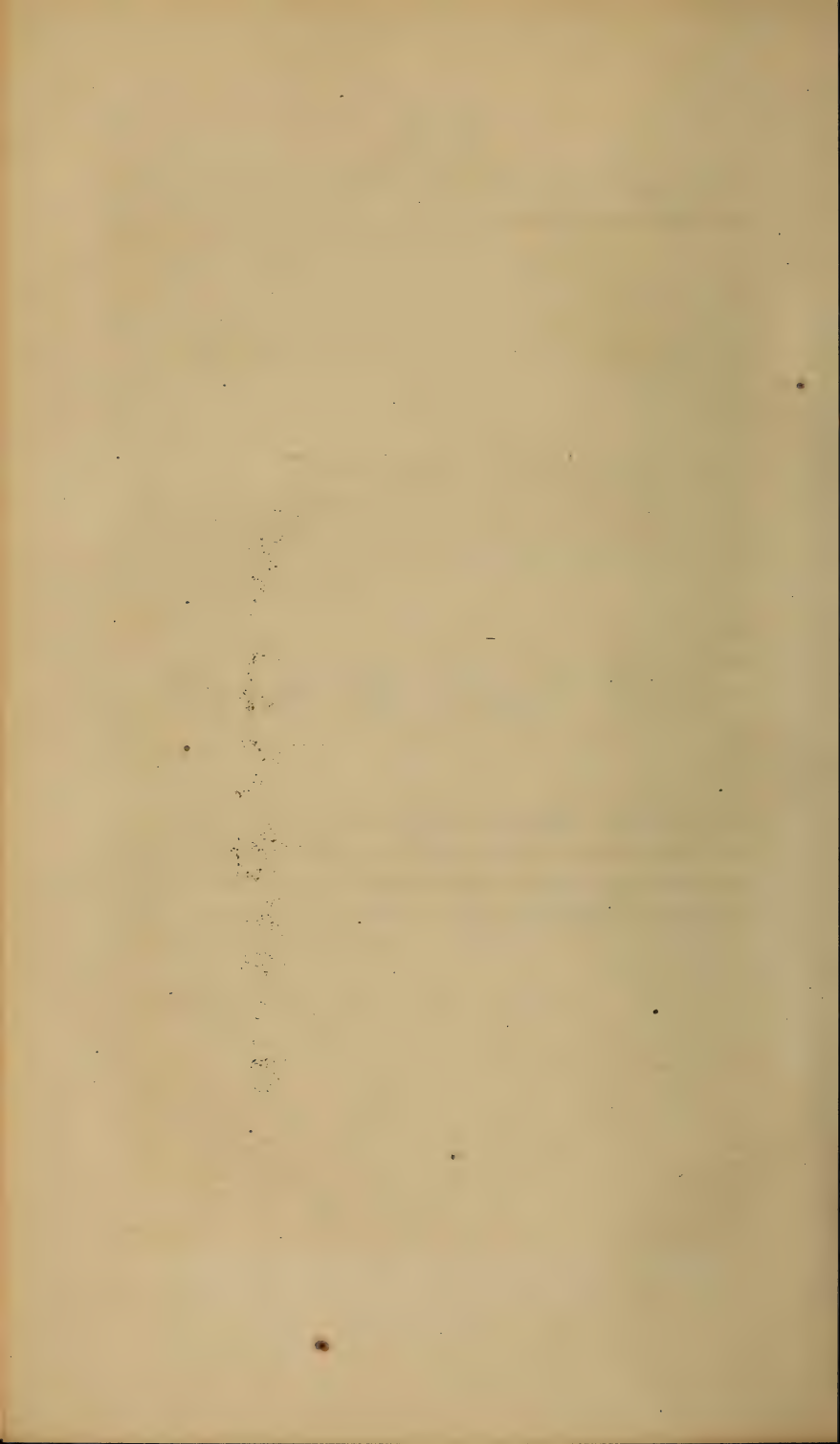
I have further taken the liberty of adding to the author's enumeration of the countries which have distinguished themselves by devotion to the Mother of God, some which he entirely omitted, and which are yet, as far as their Catholic population is concerned, as devout to the Blessed Virgin as any mentioned by the author, who, having written some thirty years ago, and in Italy, was not in possession of much data concerning Catholicity (an integral part of which is, of course, devotion to Mary) amongst the great family of nations who speak the English language.

The Year of Mary is, in all respects, and in every point of view, one of the very best and most complete works on the Blessed Virgin that has yet been published in a popular form. It is admirably adapted to promote true and practical devotion to the holy Mother of God, and as such, will be found of immense value to all classes, states, and conditions amongst Catholics. Hoping that it may be productive of all the good it is calculated to do, and placing it, with the pious author, under the special protection of the Mother of Christians, I commend it to the Catholic public.

M. A. S.

NEW YORK, *April*, 1865.

THE YEAR OF MARY.



THE YEAR OF MARY.

FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

INSTRUCTION UPON THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, FROM
HER IMMACULATE CONCEPTION TO HER PRESENTATION TO
THE TEMPLE.

“There shall come forth a rod out of the Root of Jesse, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon the flower of that stem.”—*Isaiah ii.*

To write the life of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, is to make the summary of all the marvels of the Lord; to collect, under one point of view, the most shining virtues; it is to depict the masterpiece of the wisdom and power of God, and, consequently, the portrait of the most holy and perfect of all creatures. This it was that made Saint Bernard say, that “nothing so frightened him as undertaking to speak of the Blessed Virgin. No!” he exclaims, “it would not suffice that I should take a living coal of fire from the altar, to purify my lips, as did Isaiah: it would need an entire globe of fire, which, consuming all the rest, should render me sufficiently able and eloquent to speak worthily of the Mother of God.”

The time having arrived when, after so many promises,

prophecies, and figures, the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Word was to be accomplished, God resolved to give to the world her in whom that great mystery was to be operated. It was in or about the four thousandth year from the Creation, that MARY, that blessed maiden, the marvel of the universe, the masterpiece of ages (according to the language of the fathers of the Church), was miraculously conceived. She was the only daughter of Joachim, named also Heli, of the tribe of Judah, and of the race of David, through Nathan, as Joseph, husband of Mary, was, through Solomon, both sons of David. Her mother was Saint Anne, of the same royal family of David, and of the same tribe of Judah. These two spouses, the holiest and most religious then on the earth, had lived together more than twenty years without offspring. Amongst the Jews, sterility was a sort of disgrace, and considered as a curse from God, because it precluded all hope of being able to reckon the Messiah amongst the descendants of a family thus afflicted.

The humiliating sterility of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, perfectly submitted to the will of God, entered into the designs of the Lord ; it was a condition of their having a more precious fruit of their marriage.

It is a pious and ancient tradition, that these two spouses, living in great seclusion, were separately warned by an angel, that they were soon to have a daughter, who should be the glory of Israel and the consolation of her people. And, in fact, on the eighth of December, in the same year, about four thousand years after the creation of the world, Saint Anne became pregnant of the Blessed Virgin, who, by a privilege peculiar to herself, was conceived in the grace and favor of God ;

having been exempted, by a special favor, from original sin, and endowed, from the very moment of her conception, with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost ; consequently, more holy, more acceptable in the eyes of God at that first moment, than all the saints together at the end of their life.

The fairest soul that ever was created, before the soul of Jesus Christ, was certainly that which God united to the body of the holy Virgin at the moment of her conception; and, not only was it the most perfect soul in the world, but it may be called the most beautiful of all the works of the Creator ; "and, to find any thing greater in nature," says the blessed Peter Damian, "one must go to the very Author of nature.

"For that privileged soul," continues the same sacred orator, "so beauteous a body was prepared, that Saint Denis the Areopagite, fifty years later, confessed that he could not look upon it without being dazzled ; and that he would have adored it as a divinity, had not faith taught him that there is but one only God."

BIRTH OF MARY.

The happy term of Saint Anne's pregnancy having arrived, she brought forth, on the eighth of September, in the year of the world three thousand nine hundred and eighty-five, that blessed daughter, the masterpiece of grace, the fairest ornament of the heavenly Jerusalem, the queen of angels and of men, predestined from all eternity to be Mother of God in time. If the nations of the world are accustomed to testify such great joy when children are born to their sovereigns, because there are born to themselves kings and masters, who does not see

that the birth of Mary must necessarily fill both heaven and earth with gladness,—as the Church sings,—since she was to be the glory and the consolation of them both?

As nothing so rejoices the traveller as the day dawning on the horizon, so nothing ought to cause so much joy to men as the birth of Mary,—“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad,” exclaims the Royal Prophet. (*Ps. xcv.*) Let the heavens and the earth rejoice, since seeing Mary appear, we are sure that the Redeemer is about to come. The nativity of the holy Virgin, says Saint Ildephonso, is, as it were, the beginning of the birth of Jesus Christ; and even as the dawn is the end of the night, so that auspicious birth was the end of our ills, and the commencement of that happy day for which all men had sighed. All the ages, says Saint John Damascene, seemed to dispute for the glory of seeing the Blessed Virgin born. On that happy day, adds Saint Peter Damian, was born her by whom we are all born again; for we may say with Saint Bernard, that at the birth of Mary, heaven began to be reconciled with earth, inasmuch as that birth was, as it were, the preliminary of the peace that Jesus Christ was to make between God and men.

BIRTH-PLACE OF MARY.

It was at Nazareth, a town of Galilee, the abode of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, that the most holy Virgin was born. She was of the tribe and family of David, as already seen, and as the Church sings in the office of the day of her birth. Endowed with those natural qualities which God had bestowed upon her, she was, as

Saint Bernard observes, the masterpiece of all the ages, and none of the daughters of Israel could ever compare with her in the marvellous assemblage of shining virtues wherewith she was enriched, for it was of her that the Holy Ghost said by the Prophet (*Prov. xxxi.*), "Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all."

The birth of Mary was without pomp, like that of Jesus Christ, which was to be, in the eyes of the world, obscure enough; it being the will of God that there should be a perfect conformity of condition between the Mother and the Son. Many of the holy fathers believe that Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, being warned that notwithstanding their long sterility and great age they should have a daughter, had been apprized at the same time that that blessed daughter should be the mother of the Messiah. Certain it is that never child was dearer to parents, nor more richly merited their tenderness, than she did who was, from the moment of her immaculate conception, the object of the divine predilection.

OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

As Saint Joachim and Saint Anne were most exact observers of the Law, they failed not to fulfil its duties on the day appointed for the ceremony of giving the name, which, for female children, was the ninth. It is not known whether it was by a special revelation that they gave her the mysterious name of MARY, which means, in Syriac, *Lady, Mistress, Sovereign*,—and, in Hebrew, *Star of the sea, which guides in safety to the port, and of which the pilot never loses sight during the night without being in danger of shipwreck*,—but there is no

doubt, say the holy fathers, that God himself gave it to her, since she alone was to fulfil all its signification and all its mysteries. Confining ourselves here to the historical traits of the life of the holy Virgin, we shall speak more particularly of her holy name on the day which the Church consecrates to the celebration of its festival.

EXAMPLE.

Promises of Jesus Christ in favor of those who are devout to Mary.

Saint Mechtilda, while reading one day the divine words of the dying Saviour, "Woman, behold your son," felt inspired to ask the Son of God to vouchsafe to her the same favor that was granted to Saint John, for whom those words were pronounced on Calvary, and that he would deign to say again, in her behalf, to the holy Virgin, "Woman, behold thy daughter!" She had no sooner uttered this prayer than it had its effect.

She heard the adorable Saviour himself specially recommend her to the care of his holy Mother, in consideration of the blood he had shed, and the death he had suffered for the soul of that Virgin who was his spouse, in virtue of the holy vows she had taken to him. Mechtilda, filled with joy and confidence after such a recommendation, was encouraged to ask our Lord the same favor for those who should sincerely pray for it, and the divine Saviour deigned to reply that he would never refuse it to any who should ask it of him with fervor. Let us ask it, then, of him, and let us pray him to give us to Mary for her children, we ourselves choosing her for our mother. (*Life of Saint Mechtilda.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Eloi.)

An excellent practice by which to make great and rapid progress in piety, is to begin by consecrating one's self to Mary, by making a novena in her honor. Saint Eloi, amongst many other holy persons, made use of that pious practice, from which he derived the most blessed fruits.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernard.)

O Mary! all eyes are, and ever shall be, fixed on thee, as the great work that interests all ages. In thee, the angels find joy, the just grace, and sinners pardon. Justly do all creatures invoke thee, because in thee, and by thee, the hand of the Almighty has, as it were, created anew that which it had already created. Receive, then, the little that I have to offer to God. Offer it to Him thyself, that it be not rejected. Amen.

SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION UPON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, FROM HER PRESENTATION TO THE TEMPLE, TO THE DEATH OF SAINT JOACHIM AND SAINT ANNE.

"Many daughters have gathered together riches ; thou hast surpassed them all,"—*Prov.* xxxi.

EIGHTY days after the birth of a daughter, it was required that the mother should go to purify herself, and offer to the Lord, for herself and child, a lamb or two doves in sacrifice. Saint Anne failed not to acquit herself with much piety of that religious duty. She carried the young virgin to Jerusalem, and offered her to the Lord in the Temple ; but whilst the prescribed victim was being offered up for Mary, that blessed child immolated herself in a more perfect and a more spiritual manner to God, who as yet had not seen in His temple or on His altars a victim so pure, so holy, and so worthy of His divine acceptance. The young virgin offered herself entirely to her God, as the humblest of His servants, and God received her as His beloved daughter, as His stainless spouse, as the future mother of His dear Son. God alone could know how acceptable that offering was to Him, and by what superabundant grace, for that blessed child, that first exterior act of religion was accompanied.

After the ceremony, the Virgin was taken back to Nazareth, where for three years she was the object of the cares and the delight of the holy family, piety, wisdom, sweetness, and docility already marking her disposition. Even as the stars, though luminous at the first moment of their appearance, seem to shine with yet greater splendor in proportion as they ascend from the point at which they rise, so the holy Virgin, like the star whose name she bore, although she had received the gift of wisdom at the very moment of her immaculate conception, only manifested its treasures as she grew : the child was the daily object of admiration for shining marks of premature reason, because all in her was marvellous. Reason having outstripped age, St. Joachim and Saint Anne thought themselves bound also to anticipate the time for fulfilling their vow ; they had promised the Lord, that if in spite of their long sterility He should give them a child, they would consecrate it to His service in the Temple. They perceived in their daughter, when she was only three years old, a wit, a wisdom, and a piety not to be found even in older children, and they determined to go and restore to the Lord that treasure which they held only as a deposit. That sacrifice must have cost them all the more, because the child formed their whole consolation and their whole delight ; but when one is animated by the spirit of God, and by religious feeling as fervent as that of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, one willingly prefers what they owe to the Lord to their own satisfaction.

It was on the twenty-first day of the month of November that this double sacrifice was made. Saint Joachim and Saint Anne went to offer to the Lord, in the Temple, what they had in the world dearest and most precious.

Mary animated that offering and realized that sacrifice, consecrating herself to God, by the public and solemn oblation she made to Him of her heart and mind, her body, and all the powers of her soul ; it was the holiest sacrifice that had been made from the creation, and is that which is termed the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin to the Temple of Jerusalem.

Amongst the Jews there were two kinds of presentation. The first was commanded by the law, and was made on certain appointed days ; to this, it was required that women should conform eighty days after giving birth to a daughter, and forty days after, if the child were a male ; the other presentation was made by those who had vowed their children to the service of God, in the Temple, as had been done by Anna, the mother of Samuel, and by Saint Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin. For that purpose, there were around the temple of Jerusalem apartments prepared, some for men, others for women, some for boys and some for girls. There those children were carefully brought up in piety, and their employment was to serve in the sacred administrations, each according to her age, her station, her sex, and her capacity. That pious ceremony was always attended with great solemnity : the child was conducted to the Temple accompanied by all its kindred ; the father and mother presented it to the priest at the foot of the altar, declaring their vow ; and, after reciting some prayers, the priest admitted the child into the number of the ministers or servants of the house of God, till a certain specified time. This presentation is what is called, in the language of Scripture, *lending a child to the Lord*.

Isidore, of Thessalonica, says that " the presentation

of the holy Virgin in the temple of Jerusalem was made with extraordinary pomp ; that not only did all her relatives assist thereat, but that, by the inspiration of divine providence, the most eminent personages in Jerusalem were desirous of witnessing the august ceremony, which the angels invisibly celebrated with their melodious concerts."

It is not known who was the priest by whom that incomparable Virgin was received. St. Germain, patriarch of Constantinople, believed that it was St. Zachary, father of St. John the Baptist.

The holy Virgin, admitted among the virgins solemnly consecrated to the service of the Lord, was the youngest of them all, but she excelled them all in wisdom and in virtue. The beautiful qualities with which she was endowed, at once gained her the affection and esteem of her mistresses. The treasure of merits with which the Holy Ghost had enriched her at her immaculate conception, and which she every moment increased by her faithful correspondence with grace, daily manifested itself to the eyes of all who saw her ; she was the wonder of her sex, and consequently regarded as a prodigy.

Never was any thing seen so perfect ; all those who had charge over her were so struck with admiration that they considered her a miracle of sanctity.

In truth, "*there never was a purer virgin,*" as St. Ambrose says, in the excellent description he has left of her. Her modesty gave, so to speak, a new splendor to her rare beauty and sweetness. Even in her profound humility she was remarkable for a noble and majestic air : "she meditated much and spoke little," says the same father. The divine love which inflamed her heart caused her to love seclusion ; finding no pleasure save in that

intimate communion which she had continually with her beloved, she was never seen idle ; prayer, handiwork, and the reading of holy books, which she intuitively and profoundly understood, occupied all her time. Her mind, ever in accordance with her heart, never lost sight of Him whom she loved more ardently and more perfectly than all the seraphim united. Her whole life was, in some sort, but one continued exercise of the pure love of her God, with which her heart was daily more inflamed ; nothing was ever able to disturb that exercise : it may be said that sleep itself did not interrupt her prayer, and it was that which made her love retirement so much. Her assiduity in the Temple, at so tender an age, sufficiently manifested all her love. St. Ambrose admits, that “ never was any one endowed with so sublime a gift of contemplation ; and that, properly speaking, her entire life was but one continual ecstasy. Her purity was unexampled, her charity boundless, her humility unlimited, her faith cloudless, her piety unalterable. Never was abstinence carried so far : it was only to preserve her life that she took any nourishment ; natural pleasure never entered into her motives. “ Never did any one,” says the same St. Ambrose, “ better fulfil all the duties of courtesy and politeness ; her whole life was a faithful mirror of all the virtues.”

Others of the holy fathers affirm that so high an opinion was entertained of her eminent sanctity, that every one regarded her with veneration ; and that the priests, discovering in that blessed child a virtue so extraordinary, permitted her, by a special favor, to go and pray, from time to time, in that part of the Temple which was called the Holy of Holies,—a place sacred, indeed, but which may be said to have been rendered still more holy

by the fervor of her prayers. Let us conceive, if possible, the ardor of the divine fire with which the heart of Mary burned as she prayed in that holy place ! Only the celestial intelligences, the usual witnesses of her devotions, could form a just idea of the fervor of her meditations, the sublimity of her contemplation, the merit of so many multiplied acts which formed the ordinary employment of Mary during the whole time that she passed in the Temple. It is said, by Epiphanius, a priest of Constantinople, and by St. Anselm, that the holy Virgin had a perfect knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, although it was no longer in use amongst the Jews ; but it was the original language of the books of Scripture, of which the Holy Ghost had given her a supernatural understanding. And the same Epiphanius adds, that “ never did any one work so well as she in linen, in wool, in silk, in gold, and in silver, and that she never made use of art and skill but for works intended for the sacred use of the altar, or of the priests ! ” It is plain that she had received, with the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, all the science and all the talents which are the ornaments of her sex, and we cannot refuse to the holy Virgin the prerogatives, the knowledge, and the natural gifts which had been granted to Adam and Eve in their state of innocence.

EXAMPLE.

The sacrifice of human respect, made in honor of Mary, becomes the beginning of a happy change of life.

We read, in the life of Father Beauveau, a religious of the Company of Jesus, and previously Marquis of Novian, that he owed his conversion and vocation to the

ecclesiastical state, to a victory which he obtained over himself in honor of the holy Virgin.

In the year 1649, when the German troops were in Lorraine, some soldiers who were quartered at Novian, having drunk to excess, began to gamble ; and one of them, losing heavily, suddenly rose in a transport of rage, and seeing an image of the holy Virgin hanging on the wall, he turns upon it, as though it had been the cause of his losses, and struck it several blows, uttering, at the same time, the most horrible blasphemies. Scarcely had he done so, when he fell to the floor, convulsed in all his members, and in such violent and unceasing torture, that it was impossible to make him take any nourishment for four or five days. The troops, meantime, being ordered to march, the wretched soldier was fastened on a horse, that he might go with the rest ; but it was afterwards known, that, having thrown himself down in his torments, he died on the road, biting the ground and foaming with rage. This impious man was spoken of at Novian with astonishment and fear ; and about two years after the event, a missionary persuaded the inhabitants solemnly to repair the horrible sacrilege. Accordingly, the priest of the parish, the chaplain of the castle, and some missionaries and priests of the neighborhood went, in their surplices, from the church to the house in which the profanation had taken place ; but when the procession arrived there, no one presented himself to carry the image of the holy Virgin, although the pastor made signs to several persons to fill that office. M. de Beauveau, indignant at such coldness for the service of the Queen of Heaven, was moved interiorly to take the image himself ; and although the spirit of vanity, and the fear of appearing simple in the eyes of the world,

made him shrink from doing so, he nevertheless took the image, and respectfully bore it to the chapel of the castle, where it was honorably placed by order of the bishop. "The holy Virgin," adds an eye-witness of the fact, "hastened to reward that act of piety; and that triumph, obtained in her honor over human respect, was followed, as the marquis himself confessed, by an abundance of such extraordinary graces, and by such powerful inspirations to live in stricter conformity to the spirit of Christianity, that he was astonished, and sometimes even afflicted, fearing, as he said, that he should be led too far. He was converted, became a religious, and died in the odor of sanctity." (*Life of Father Beauveau.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Francis Borgia.)

Teach children, at their earliest age, to praise and invoke Mary. Saint Francis Borgia had that happiness; the first words that he was taught to pronounce were the names of Jesus and of Mary.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Epiphanius.)

O Mary! thou art the spouse of the Holy Trinity, and the hidden treasure of the blessings it bestows; grace has been given thee without measure. By thee it is that Eve has been raised up after her fall, and that Adam has been restored to Paradise, whence his sin had driven him; it is by thee, O holy Virgin, and by thine

aid, that a most celestial peace has been given unto the world, that men have been placed in the rank of angels, and are called the servants, the friends, and the children of God. It is by thee that death has been trampled under foot, hell despoiled, idols overthrown, and the knowledge of heaven and of thy divine Son spread upon the earth. Deign, then, to interest thyself in our behalf, and we shall be sure of enjoying that bliss, the plenitude of which is thine. Amen.

THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY,—BEING
THAT WITHIN THE OCTAVE.

INSTRUCTION UPON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, FROM THE
DEATH OF SAINT JOACHIM AND SAINT ANNE, TO THE VISIT-
ATION.

“The Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel.”—*Isaiah*, chap. vii.

THE holy Virgin had been eight or nine years in the Temple, exciting the admiration of men and angels by the extraordinary lustre of her sanctity, and her marvellous combination of the rarest virtues, when she lost her father, Saint Joachim, and, shortly afterwards, her mother, Saint Anne.

The death of parents so beloved affected her very sensibly; but her affliction was moderated by her certainty of their predestination, which reconciled her to the decrees of Divine Providence. As the priests who served the Temple were officially the guardians of the young orphan girls consecrated to the service of God, they had thenceforth a special care over the Virgin, who had so long been the object of their admiration. As she approached the age of fifteen, those same guardians began to think of finding her a husband worthy of her. When they first mentioned the subject to her, she was alarmed: an ancient author, quoted by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, says, that “the holy Virgin then modestly represented

to those who were charged with the direction of her conduct, that having been consecrated to God by her parents, even before her birth, that she might serve in the Temple, she had herself subsequently ratified that consecration ; that she had no desire but to remain there in her quality of virgin ; that if the intention of the authors of her days were respected, she would be left to follow her own inclinations, which led her to remain in a virginal condition." Her devotion was commended ; but as it was the glory and ambition of the Jews—especially those of the tribe of Juda, and the race of David—to have a posterity, in the hope of one day having some consanguinity to the Messiah, her wishes were not acceded to, and the only trouble was to find a fitting husband for her of the same tribe and the same royal family as herself. There was a custom established amongst the Jews, and religiously observed, that, when a family was reduced to one girl, she should espouse her nearest relative of the same tribe, to the end that the alliances being made within narrow limits, a clearer view might be had of the genealogy of the Messiah, who was the object of all marriages and of all generations, as well in the law of nature as in the written law. The holy Virgin knowing, therefore, the object they had in giving her in marriage, did not think it expedient to declare her secret vow of perpetual virginity, persuaded that, having made it so young, her guardians would not fail to dispense her from it : she had recourse to prayer, and ceased not, day or night, to beseech the Lord that he would have a special care over his spouse.

When her fifteenth year was completed, they assembled all her nearest relatives, who were of the tribe of Juda and of the family of David : amongst those who

were in a state to marry her, they chose Saint Joseph, whom Divine Providence had destined from all eternity to be the guardian and the foster-father of the world's Redeemer, by becoming the husband of Mary. Some authors have been of opinion that he was her uncle, or, at least, her cousin-german; what is quite certain is that he was one of her nearest relations, of the same tribe and of the same royal blood as herself, although the vicissitudes of fortune had reduced him to the low condition of an artisan, for he was a worker in wood. "But obscure as that condition was, never man," says Saint Epiphanius, "was nobler or richer in virtues, in the sight of God." The same father adds, that Saint Joseph was at that time far advanced in age, and that he had never intended to marry, having resolved to pass his whole life in a state of virginity; and, that if, in his declining years, he consented to espouse Mary, his relative, it was, that knowing her high virtue and her extraordinary chastity, he promised her that she should always live a virgin in marriage. It is even believed that they had mutually agreed on this before their espousals.

The marriage took place at Jerusalem, and heaven never saw a union more worthy to be honored with the presence of the celestial court. Accordingly, many churches make a particular festival of it on the 23d of January, which is thought to have been the day of that august ceremony. Saint Thomas believes, that it was after that auspicious marriage that Saint Joseph and the holy Virgin made, by common consent, their vow of perpetual chastity, or that they renewed it.

This vow of chastity, say the holy fathers, was till then unknown. It was Mary, says Saint Ambrose, who first gave us the example of it, and who, by the vow

she made, raised, in some sort, the standard of virginity upon earth ; she thus drew after her that infinite multitude of virgins who follow the celestial spouse, and who form her brilliant court; according to the words of the Prophet-king, she led virgins after her to the king.

“It was the will of God, that the virgin who was to be the mother of his Son without ceasing to be a virgin, should be married,” says Saint Jerome; “firstly, that it might be known that she was of the tribe of Judah and of the race of David, because the genealogy of women amongst the Jews was only known by that of their husband; secondly, that her miraculous pregnancy might not be imputed to her as a crime; and thirdly, because—being obliged to carry the child Jesus into Egypt, to save him from the cruelty of Herod, who would seek to put him to death, and include him in the slaughter of the Innocents—it was necessary that she should have the assistance of her husband on the journey, and during her sojourn in that strange land. Saint Ignatius the martyr adds a fourth reason,” says the same Saint Jerome, “it was in order that the devil might remain ignorant of the miraculous conception of the Messiah, who, although to be born of a virgin, was nevertheless born of a married woman.” The holy Virgin lived in great seclusion all the time that she remained in Nazareth ; she gave herself up entirely to prayer and contemplation ; she never lost sight of God ; neither the work of her hands, nor the care of her little household, interrupted her prayer nor her intimate union with God. Never was so much modesty seen. “Her very presence inspired a respect approaching to veneration. She rarely appeared in public,” says Saint Ambrose ; “she conversed little

with men, because her whole correspondence was with heaven. Her charity alone rendered her visible to those who felt its effects."

The chaste pair had lived some time together in the practice of virtue, when, the time having arrived which the eternal decrees had appointed for the Son of God to come into the world, the angel Gabriel was sent to that incomparable virgin to announce to her that this great mystery should be wrought in her womb, and to make known to her that the divine Word, having resolved to become flesh, had chosen her from all others to be his mother. The Angel appeared to her, says Saint Bernard, when, invisible to the rest of mankind, she was sacrificing herself to her God in the fervor of the most sublime contemplation, at the very moment when she was meditating on that ineffable mystery; the heavenly messenger presented himself respectfully to her, whom he already regarded as his sovereign, in a form of dazzling light, and said to her—"Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women," &c.

The appearance of an angel, under the form of a man, at first caused some alarm to the purest of virgins, and a eulogium so magnificent and so flattering alarmed her humility, and caused her to blush; she appeared troubled. The angel hastened to reassure her: "Fear not, Mary," said he, "thou hast found favor before God; thou shalt conceive and bear a son, to whom you shall give the name of Jesus; he shall be great in all things; the great wonders that he shall perform will loudly proclaim what he is, and make him plainly known as the son of the Most High, and as the Messiah who has hitherto been the object of the desires and the expecta-

tion of all ages. As thy son, he shall be a descendant of David, since thou art of the royal blood ; but it is not in right of succession that he shall ascend the throne ; royalty and sovereign power are due to him by many other titles. As the Son of God, he shall rule over all the nations of the world, but his crown shall not be of the same nature as the crowns of earthly kings, who rule only over one nation, and during a certain number of years ; not one of them but has a successor ; not one, whose power, whose majesty, and all his titles, do not terminate at his death. Thy son shall found a new monarchy, that will gather together all nations in the mysterious house of Jacob ; he shall reign therein without ever having either rivals or successors ; the empire of that great King shall take in the whole universe, its duration shall be for eternity."

Such were then the sentiments of the most humble of all creatures, that she could not conceive that God should have cast His eyes on her for the accomplishment of a mystery so incomprehensible to mortal minds ; moreover, the quality of mother alarmed her, so much had she at heart the preservation of that of virgin ; she accordingly demanded how that was to be done : which she would not have asked, says Saint Augustine, had she not made a vow of perpetual virginity.

The angel replied, that that need not alarm her, that God was all-powerful, and that his goodness was equal to his power ; that having chosen her by so eminent a predilection to elevate her to so great a dignity, he would work in her behalf the greatest of all miracles ; that she had nothing to fear for her virginity, inasmuch as that virtue was to be one of the principal characteristics of the mother of the Messiah ; that, for her en-

couragement, he was to assure her that the adorable Son whose mother she was to be in time, should have no other father than He of whom he was born before all ages ; that, properly speaking, she should have no other husband than the Holy Ghost, who, being the power of the Most High, would miraculously form within her, of her own blood, the divine fruit she was to bear, and which, far from tarnishing the flower of her virginity, would render it still more pure and more resplendent. "Hence it is," added the angel, "that the holy child to be born of thee will be truly the Son of God, not merely in name, but really and by nature ; and to convince you," he continued, "that nothing is impossible to the omnipotence of God, behold, your cousin Elizabeth, though of an age at which she could not naturally hope to have a child, is six months advanced in pregnancy: so true it is that nothing is impossible to the Almighty ; for, he who can give a child to so aged a woman, after so many years of barrenness, may as well give one to a virgin."

Whilst the angel spoke, Mary, enlightened by a supernatural light, perfectly comprehended all the economy and all the marvels of the mystery for which the Lord had prepared her from her immaculate conception, and, humbling herself before God, she said : "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done unto me according to thy word."

The angel disappeared, and the Holy Ghost formed of the pure blood of the Virgin the most beauteous body ever created ; God united it substantially to the most perfect soul in the divine person of the eternal Word, who thus was made flesh, becoming man. At that auspicious moment, the first epoch of our redemption, all

the celestial spirits adored the Man-God, and Mary at the same moment became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin.

EXAMPLE.

Marvellous effects of Devotion to Mary.

Saint Bernardine, of Sienna, while still young, felt so strong an attraction to the images of the blessed Virgin, that he regularly visited, every day, a figure of our Lady over one of the gates of the town of Sienna. His zeal was so acceptable to that mother of goodness, that she procured him the grace of his religious vocation, and, after having favored him with a thousand benedictions in the order of St. Francis, she even deigned to appear to him one day, and to address him thus : "Your devotion pleases me, and, as a pledge of still greater reward, I give you the gift of preaching and the power to perform miracles ; these are gifts which I have obtained for you from my divine Son ; and I add to them the promise that you shall share eternally in the happiness I enjoy in heaven." The results manifested the truth of this apparition ; for St. Bernardine was one of the greatest preachers of his time ; he enlightened the whole Church with the splendor of his doctrine, his miracles, and his sanctity. What a happy fruit of his devotion to Mary, and of a vocation embraced under her direction ! (*Life of St. Bernardine.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the blessed Herman.)

Have always about you some object that will remind you of the blessed Virgin ; for instance, a picture of

her in your book, or a rosary in your pocket. Armed with such protection, you need fear nothing.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Aloysius Gonzaga.)

O Mary, my sovereign mistress, I confidently throw myself into the bosom of thy mercy. I give myself wholly and unreservedly to thy holy and safe keeping, and in thy hands this day, every day of my life, and at the hour of my death, I place my soul and body, all my hope and consolation, my woes and my troubles, my joy and my happiness, to the end that all my thoughts, words, and actions may be done and directed according to thy good pleasure and the will of thy adorable Son. Amen.

FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, FROM HER
VISITATION TO THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*Luke i.*

THE holy Virgin having learned from the angel the miraculous pregnancy of her cousin Elizabeth, felt herself inspired to go and see her, to rejoice with her over such an un hoped for wonder. With the consent of her chaste husband, Saint Joseph, she accordingly set out, and journeyed in all haste through the mountains of Judea to the city of Hebron, where dwelt her cousin, Saint Elizabeth. The road was long and difficult ; Hebron, a priestly city, situated in the southern part of the tribe of Judah, was distant from Jerusalem about ten or twelve leagues, and from Nazareth about forty leagues. This journey must necessarily have been painful to a person so delicate as Mary, but her zeal and her charity overcame all obstacles. Moreover, it pleased God to make Mary instrumental in sanctifying the precursor even in his mother's womb, and Mary obeyed with alacrity the inspiration of making that visit. On reaching Hebron, the holy Virgin went straight to the house of Zacharias. Elizabeth, hearing of her cousin's arrival, hastens to meet her ; Mary salutes and embraces her, and scarcely

had she opened her mouth to compliment her, when the child of six months, whom Elizabeth carried in her womb, was suddenly enlightened with a celestial light. Even in the darkness of his prison, he discerned who they were that honored and favored him with a visit, and, unable to speak, he honored Mary and Jesus, as he could, by a miraculous motion in his mother's womb; which was, says St. John Chrysostom, the token of his respect, and his premature gratitude. Elizabeth perceived it, and the supernatural light which enlightened the child, being reflected upon the mother, she knew by inspiration the incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation of the Word; her soul was filled with the Holy Ghost, and then, trembling herself with joy, she replied to the kindly salutation of the Blessed Virgin by saying aloud: "*Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*" Considering at the same time the extraordinary merit of her who came to pay her a visit, and whose supreme dignity the Holy Ghost had revealed to her, she exclaimed, "*Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to visit me?*" "It is a favor which I cannot sufficiently admire, and which fills me with astonishment and confusion, knowing how unworthy I am of it: the very child that I bear in my womb has already felt the marvellous effects of your presence, for the moment I heard the words with which you accosted me, he also heard them and leaped for joy."

"Oh, how happy you are, my dear cousin," she continued, "how happy you are, who implicitly and faithfully believed what the angel told you on the part of God! Yes, that Almighty God, who has begun to effect in you things so great and so marvellous, will accomplish them

according as you have hoped. He has promised you: He will keep His word."

Those praises and that manifestation of the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, glorious as they were to Mary, did not inflate her heart. She could not indeed conceal, or be silent about the marvels which God had revealed to Elizabeth, and had just published by her mouth ; but she would refer to Him all the glory, acknowledging her own unworthiness. Then, animated by the Holy Ghost, with whom she was filled, giving way to the impulse of her heart and mind, which were occupied only by God, she uttered that canticle, the first in the New Testament, which surpasses all the former ones, by the spirit of piety in which it abounds, by the sublimity of its sentiments, and by the nobleness and majesty of its style. It is the most precious monument of the profound humility of the Mother of God, the most striking act of her eminent holiness, the best model of the most perfect gratitude.

"My soul," says she, "doth magnify the Lord, and transported with joy as I reflect upon the goodness of my Saviour, I can be no longer silent concerning His marvels, for He hath deigned to regard the lowliness of His handmaiden; wherefore all generations shall henceforth call me blessed. The Almighty, whose name is infinitely holy, and whose mercy extends from generation to generation, upon all those who fear Him, the Almighty has wrought great miracles in my behalf! Thus it is that He manifests, when He will, the might of His arm. He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He humbles the great ones of the earth to raise the lowly. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent away empty ; He hath

received Israel his servant, being mindful of His mercy ; He will fulfil the promise that He made to our fathers, to Abraham and all his posterity."

It was in that admirable canticle that Mary saw at a glance, and by a supernatural light, all the ancient promises and their fulfilment, being herself a thousand times more enlightened and more privileged than all the prophets together.

The holy Virgin remained nearly three months with St. Elizabeth. It is easy to understand, say the holy fathers, how advantageous that stay was to the household of Zacharias, and what abundance of graces and benedictions came of it ; for if the Lord had of old so abundantly blessed Obededom, and all belonging to him, for having had the ark of the covenant three months in his house, what blessings must not Mary's three months stay draw down upon the household of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Mary being the true ark of the New Testament, of whom that of the old was but an imperfect type ! "The purity of the life of St. John the Baptist," says Saint Ambrose, "was the effect of that unction and that grace which were infused into his soul by the holy Virgin ; and, in fact, that visit of the holy Virgin to St. Elizabeth contained such great marvels, that the Church would have the memory of it annually renewed, by the establishment of a particular festival on the 2d of July, being the octave of the nativity of Saint John the Baptist ; and not without reason, since it is the day on which the holy Virgin was first publicly recognized as the Mother of God, and honored as such.

Most of the holy fathers and of the commentators are of opinion that the holy Virgin did not wait for the delivery of Saint Elizabeth, but returned home a few

days before the birth of the Precursor of the Messiah. On her return to Nazareth she entered again on her sweet seclusion ; her journey had not lessened her love of solitude, and the manifestation of the Divine maternity had not changed her deep humility. What had taken place at Hebron did her too much honor to permit of her telling it even to Saint Joseph, and she did not care to discover to him what the Holy Ghost still kept concealed, until Joseph himself perceived her pregnancy. The high and just idea that he had of the holiness and chastity of his wife did not permit him to suspect her of adultery ; aware of her vow of virginity, witness of her extreme delicacy as to the virtue which was so dear to him, he doubted not that she must be that miraculous virgin of whom Isaiah spoke (chap. vii.), who, without ceasing to be a virgin, was to bring forth the Saviour of the world—*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a Son*. He believed it, says Saint Bernard, and it was only through a sentiment of humility and respect, like that of Saint Peter when he said to Jesus Christ, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinner,” that Saint Joseph, who was no less humble than that Apostle, likewise thought of departing from the holy Virgin, who, he doubted not, was pregnant of the Saviour. The chaste spouse at first knew not on what to determine ; he could not resolve to leave Mary, yet could not believe himself holy enough to remain with her. He was in this perplexity when an angel appeared to him and said : “Joseph, remember that you are of the race of David, of which the Messiah is to come, and believe not that it is without a purpose that the Lord has given you Mary as your wife : the child of which she is pregnant, and which she has miraculously con-

ceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the Saviour of the world, the only Son of the Eternal Father, the promised Messiah. God has chosen you to be his guardian, his foster-father, and in that sense his father. Fear not, then, to remain with Mary your wife, you are the protector, and, as it were, the guardian angel of her virginity."

Joseph, made aware of the greatest of all mysteries, in the accomplishment of which God willed that he should have some share, confirmed by this envoy of the Most High in the belief he had had of the sublime dignity of his wife, and at the same time reassured against the holy fears of his humility, no longer regarded Mary but as the living temple of the Divinity, the mother of the Redeemer, and the queen of angels and of men. This respect and veneration for her increased with his tender affection; he admired her as the greatest of all marvels; he honored her as the most eminent person in the universe; and his cares, his attentions, and his duties were proportioned to his esteem and to all his sentiments. The holy Virgin passed thus with her husband the first six months of her pregnancy; they both lived in perfect recollection, in continual meditation. God bestowed a profusion of the most signal favors upon these two privileged souls, and it is beyond doubt that from the incarnation of the divine Word in the chaste womb of Mary, she was continually surrounded by a numerous company of angels specially appointed to guard and preserve her sacred person, so necessary to the salvation of men, so dear to God himself, and so respected by all heaven.

The end of the ninth month of Mary's pregnancy was drawing near, when the Emperor Augustus wishing for

precise statistics of the strength and the revenues of his empire, ordered a census of all his subjects, amongst whom the Jews were included. He issued an edict, by the terms of which all were obliged, in order to avoid confusion, to repair each to the place of their origin, to have themselves inscribed on the public registers, and to pay a tax of so much a head. In issuing this edict, the emperor was actuated only by avarice and ambition ; but Providence so disposed things, in order that Joseph and Mary being obliged to repair to Bethlehem, the Messiah should come into the world, in that little town, where it had been foretold that he should be born, and that thus the prophecy might be fulfilled. For although Saint Joseph and the blessed Virgin were settled at Nazareth, a town of Galilee, they were nevertheless of the tribe of Judah, of the house and family of David ; and, as David was born and had been brought up at Bethlehem, that town was, as it were, the chief place of all his descendants, and had always retained the name of David ; thither it was, too, that all who were descended from that king were to go, to have themselves inscribed on the public register.

EXAMPLES.

Blessed end of a Client of Mary.

It is related that Father Salmeron, of the Society of Jesus, having always had a tender devotion for the blessed Virgin, died exclaiming, "To Paradise ! to Paradise ! Blessed be the time during which I served thee, O Mary, and blessed be all my preachings, all my toils, and all I have done and thought for thee, O my Queen."

In these sweet and beautiful sentiments it was that he drew his last breath. (NIEREMBERG, *Journal de Marie.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. John of God.)

Daily invoke the Blessed Virgin, to obtain her sure assistance at the hour of death. St. John of God, when in the last extremity, having had recourse to that mother of goodness, heard these gracious words : " John, I do not abandon my servants at this hour."

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(St. Germain, patriarch of Constantinople, *De Præsentatione.*)

O divine Mary, my only sovereign, and, after God, my true consolation in this world, thou art that celestial dew which alone soothes my pains ; thou art the light that illumines the darkness by which my soul is surrounded ; thou art my guide in my journeyings, my strength in my weakness, my treasure in my poverty, the dressing of my wounds, my comfort in my tears, my refuge in my miseries, and the hope of my salvation. O Mary, have pity on me ; thou, the mother of God, who lovest mankind so much, grant me all I ask of thee ; thou, who art our joy and our defence, make me worthy to enjoy with thee that great felicity which thou enjoyest in heaven. Amen.

FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, FROM THE
BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE RETURN OF MARY TO
NAZARETH.

“Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.”—
Luke ii.

THE holy Virgin, perfectly aware of all that was to happen, and knowing well that it was at Bethlehem her son was to be born, provided herself with the necessary swaddling clothes. When, accompanied by Joseph, she arrived at Bethlehem, they found that all the inns were occupied by those who were of the same royal race, and whom the edict of the prince had called thither, like themselves, from all parts. No lodgings were to be had; richer people had secured them all; they were, therefore, obliged to retire to a cavern or grotto belonging to one of the inns, a little beyond the gates of the city, and used as a stable for beasts of burden. It was in that species of stable that the purest and most august of virgins, without suffering and without ceasing to be a virgin, brought into the world the King of heaven and earth, the sovereign Master of the universe, that Messiah so long expected and so ardently desired, in whom all the promises and all the prophecies were perfectly fulfilled. The Messiah was born at midnight, on the 25th of December, in the year of the world four thousand, from which auspicious day the Christian era was dated.

It is impossible to conceive the joy, the tenderness, and the veneration of that blessed mother, holding for the first time in her arms that divine infant whom she at once revered as her God and loved as her only son. That joy would, indeed, have been moderated by the wretchedness of the place to which poverty had consigned her, had she not, by a supernatural light, discovered all the mystery of an extraordinary Providence; she failed not to feel, as the most tender of mothers, all the humiliation and inconvenience which her state entailed on her beloved son. It is true, that the arrival of the shepherds, and shortly after, that of the Eastern kings, consoled her. Thus, whilst the world so unworthily received the sovereign Master of the universe, heaven hastened to pay him due homage and adoration; and when he was not received by his own into his own inheritance, foreign princes came to adore him, and to recognize him as the true God, the King of the Jews, and the true Messiah.

The holy Virgin wished to learn, both from the shepherds and the Magi, even the most minute details of what had occurred to them on the occasion of the birth of her divine Son: she lost nothing of all the miraculous things she heard related; she inwardly noted it all, considering with pleasure the perfect accomplishment of the prophecies on which she had so often meditated, and remembering the promises of the angel Gabriel. Although she was fully informed of the whole mystery of the Incarnation of the divine Word, she failed not to acquire new light every day from the marvels worked on account of her dear Son, the Man-God. But far from pouring forth her joy in conversations that would have gratified self-love, she kept all her wonder within her

own soul, never speaking of that great mystery which did her so much honor. Never was there seen such prudence and modesty, as in the holy Virgin and Saint Joseph; they contented themselves with inwardly admiring and glorifying God for every thing marvellous that came to pass, leaving to Divine Providence the care of manifesting, at some future time, the treasure which they possessed.

Forty days had elapsed, after the birth of the Saviour; they had spent them at Bethlehem, somewhat less wretchedly than in the stable. Religious observers of the law, they repaired to Jerusalem on the second of February, to acquit themselves of the legal ceremony of the presentation of the son and the purification of the mother. The law of purification undoubtedly did not apply to Mary, who, having conceived solely by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and having become a mother without ceasing to be a virgin, had no need of being purified like ordinary women; but it sufficed that it was an act of humility and religion for her to believe it obligatory on herself. She regarded neither her quality of Mother of God, nor her virginal privilege. Jesus Christ having himself submitted to the humiliating law of circumcision, Mary did not think herself entitled to exemption from that of purification. She repaired, therefore, to the Temple of Jerusalem, carrying her Son in her arms; she offered to the Lord two doves, as the law ordained for the poor—for she was never ashamed of her poverty; and she redeemed for five shekels (that is to say, something about eighty-five cents, or three shillings and eight pence, British) him who was to immolate himself on the cross for the redemption of men; she, in some sort redeemed him as a victim committed to her care, and only as a deposit.

If Mary, as a virgin, made a great sacrifice in the legal purification as a mother, she made no less a one in the presentation of her Son: inasmuch as, in offering him to the Eternal Father, she devoted him to the death of the cross ; giving thus, despite all her maternal tenderness, what was most precious to her on earth for the salvation of sinners. Accordingly, St. Bonaventure applies to her on this occasion those beautiful words of Saint John : “ ‘ God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.’ Mary,” says that holy doctor, “ so loved the world as to give her only Son for its redemption.”

What took place at that sad ceremony is sufficiently well known, and especially the prediction made to Mary by the holy old man Simeon, when, holding the divine infant in his arms, addressing his mother, he said: “ You are the happiest of all mothers to have such a Son, but you must count upon being more afflicted, as you shall witness the unworthy manner in which he shall one day be treated, even by those whose salvation he will have most at heart. I warn you, moreover, that this divine infant, the object of your delight and of the love of God his father, shall be the butt of contradiction. Although he has come into the world only for the salvation of all, yet many will fail by their own fault to profit by the blessing of redemption ; so, rejecting him as their Saviour, they shall one day have him as their judge. But what I foretell to you especially is, that you shall share in all the sufferings of that dear Son, and that your soul shall be pierced as with a sword by the grief you will feel at seeing him suffer and die the most cruel of all deaths.”

She was not long without seeing the fulfilment of

what Simeon had foretold concerning the persecutions which her adorable Son was to undergo. For scarcely had the holy family arrived at Bethlehem, returning from Jerusalem, when an angel appeared in a dream to Saint Joseph, and ordered him, on the part of God, to rise immediately, take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt, not to return thence without a command from heaven, "for," said the angel, "it shall come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him, and you have no time to lose."

The journey was long and painful, especially for a young and very delicate woman ; the term of the journey was little more consoling, for it was to dwell in a distant land, and surrounded by an idolatrous people, who were by nature harsh towards strangers. But God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, so changed the hearts of the Egyptians in favor of that exiled family, that it was received with unexpected kindness and charity. The sweetness and modesty of the holy Virgin won, from the first day, the strong, hard hearts of those superstitious pagans. An air of supernatural majesty shone in the infant Jesus ; no one could behold Him without feelings of tenderness and veneration. The holy family remained in Egypt until the death of Herod, that is to say, about a year ; for that tyrant died a few months after he had caused the slaughter of the innocents. Then the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said to him : "Take the child and his mother, and return into the land of Israel, for he who sought the life of the child Jesus is dead." Saint Joseph arose, took the child and his mother, and returned with them into the land of Israel ; but having learned that Archelaus reigned in Judea, in the place of Herod his father, and

fearing lest that prince had also inherited his ambition and cruelty, Joseph did not go thither ; warned again by the angel, he retired with Mary and the child into Galilee, and they took up their abode at Nazareth, the place of their birth. It was in that favored country that this rich treasure lay so long concealed ; it was in that obscure retreat that the holy Virgin nursed and reared her divine Son, God and Man together, with equal care and love, and with all the respect wherewith she was penetrated.

EXAMPLE.

Mary grants Signal Graces to those who honor the Actions of her life.

Saint Vincent Ferrier relates that a merchant of Valentia, in Spain, was accustomed, on every Christmas day, to invite to dinner, in honor of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, an aged man, together with a woman suckling an infant. That pious man, after his death, appeared to some one who prayed for him, and related that, at the hour of his death, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, came to visit him, and said, " In your lifetime you received us into your house in the person of those three poor people. We now come to introduce you into ours ;" and that they straightway conducted him to Paradise. (*Life of Saint Vincent Ferrier.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Father Guittières.)

The servants of Mary should perform in her honor works of mercy, such as tending the sick, praying for

sinner, and other such acts which are all infinitely pleasing to the heart of that good mother ; this was the practice of Father Martin Guittières. He acknowledged, at the moment of his death, that he had never asked a favor of Mary without having obtained it.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Anselm.)

Oh, my holy Queen, since God has raised thee to so high a dignity, and as all things are possible through Him, we pray thee that the plenitude of the graces thou hast merited may render us sharers in thy glory ; vouchsafe, then, O mother most merciful, to procure us that happiness for which God was pleased to become man in thy chaste womb ! Graciously hear our prayers ; if, thou thyself wilt pray for us to thy divine Son, he will immediately hear thee, and we shall be saved, if such is thy will. Amen.

SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, FROM HER RETURN TO NAZARETH UNTIL THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

“My heart hath uttered a good word; I speak my works to the king.”—*Ps.* xliv.

FROM Mary's return to Nazareth till the period of her journey to Jerusalem, the sacred historian gives no particular account of her life, save that in that obscure retirement her divine Son was submissive to her, as well as to Saint Joseph. But if the Scripture says no more of the holy Virgin, it is doubtless because that it is easier to imagine than to describe all that was mysterious, wonderful, and ineffable in the infancy of the Saviour, whether on the part of the tenderest and most devoted of mothers, or on that of the most wonderful, the most amiable, and the most deserving of children. The torrents of delight wherewith the blessed are inundated in heaven were in some sort collected in that holy family. What must have been the transports of the holy Virgin's love at sight of her divine Son! Her heart was occupied only by him; she constantly held him in her arms, she cherished him beyond all expression, knowing that that divine infant was her Creator, her Saviour, and her God; by her respect, her adoration, her care and watchful solicitude; by her love and by her worship, she compensated for those duties of religion and gratitude which were due to him on the part of men,

to whom the Man-God was as yet unknown. Nevertheless, Jesus having attained the age of twelve years, the holy Virgin and Saint Joseph were inspired to take him with them to Jerusalem for the Paschal feast; the solemnity being ended, as all those who belonged to the same town or district formed themselves into separate companies for their homeward journey, and travelled in several bands, the Saviour allowed Saint Joseph and the blessed Virgin to set out without him; both of them supposing that Jesus was in one of the other companies, they did not perceive his absence until evening.

Persuaded as the Blessed Virgin was that the conduct of her beloved Son was as wise as it was mysterious, she yet could not help being sensibly afflicted by his absence, as she manifested to him when she found him; for having returned to Jerusalem on the following morning with Saint Joseph, and having found her Son seated in the Temple amidst the doctors, who were questioning and listening to him, charmed by the precocious and supernatural wisdom which he manifested in all his answers, she said to him: "My Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The answer explained the mystery, and showed plainly enough that there was no fault on his part, since he had only remained in Jerusalem to do the will of his heavenly Father. "Why sought ye me?" was his reply: "knew ye not that I was engaged in the business of my Father?" Having then set forward with them, he went to Nazareth, and was there submissive to them, which is all that we learn about the Mother and the Son at that time from the sacred historians. The evangelists themselves only say of Jesus from his twelfth to his thirtieth year, "and he was submissive to them."

It is not to be imagined, say the holy fathers, how eminent and sublime were the virtues practised by the holy Virgin during that obscure and secluded life which she passed with her dear Son, in the humble condition to which Saint Joseph was reduced, in order to make a living; but the poverty of the family did not degrade its nobility. The holy Virgin passed all that time in a deep and sweet seclusion, which the visible presence of Jesus Christ rendered delightful as that enjoyed by the blessed in heaven. Who can relate the pious conversations of the Mother with her Son, or the ordinary discourse of that holy family? Saint Joseph endeavored to provide by his labors for the wants of the mother, and the holy Virgin took care of her little household without ever losing sight of her Son. Never was there a life more sweet; never was there a family more happy, more revered, more worthy the homage of angels and of men, in the midst of its very obscurity.

It is not known precisely at what time Saint Joseph died; what is certain is, that he was not alive when Jesus Christ began to preach his Gospel. It is, therefore, evident that he died the death of the just, during the private and hidden life of Jesus Christ at Nazareth. Resigned as the holy Virgin was to any and every event, that separation from her chaste spouse could not fail to be sensibly painful to her: but she was the ornament of her sex; "and it was expedient," says Saint Ambrose, "that having been the model and the glory of young maidens, and of married women, without ceasing to be a virgin, she should become the model of widows." Meanwhile, the time being come when the Saviour was to manifest himself to the world, it is probable that he acquainted the holy Virgin of his intention to pass forty

days in the desert, his fast and his retreat being the necessary prelude to his public life, and the first epoch, so to speak, in his mission. On his return, having assembled his first disciples, he rejoined his Mother at Nazareth, passed some days with her, and, no doubt, communicated to her the plan and economy of his labors and his miracles.

Jesus Christ had begun to announce the kingdom of heaven to the people, when he was invited, by some of his relations according to the flesh, to be present with his Mother and his first disciples at a wedding which was to take place at Cana, a small town in Galilee, not far from Nazareth. During the repast, the wine having failed, the Blessed Virgin, who was seated at table near him, perceiving the embarrassment of those who had invited them, and wishing to spare them the confusion likely to follow their want of forethought, made known to the Saviour her desire that he should relieve their trouble by a miracle. That mother of mercy, who always anticipates our wants, contented herself with saying to him, in a low voice: "They have no wine." The Son of God, desirous of showing his deference for his mother, anticipated, on her account, the hour for manifesting his omnipotence; he instantly changed the water into excellent wine. And this was the first of his public miracles: he would have it due to the prayer of the holy Virgin.

The Saviour having deemed it expedient to take up his abode at Capharnaum, the holy Virgin, who never left him, accompanied him thither; she was with him at Jerusalem, for the Paschal feast, after which she followed him to the banks of the Jordan, where he began to confer baptism. The holy fathers doubt not that she re-

ceived it from his own hands; and although, doubtless, she had no need of baptism, because she was exempt from all sin, even venial, and preserved, as has been said, from original sin, she would not dispense with it, after the Saviour had submitted to the law of circumcision, and herself to the legal purification. Moreover, it is certain that no one having ever observed or fulfilled all the duties of the law with more perfection than the holy Virgin, she would not willingly have been deprived of a sacrament which is the characteristic seal of the faithful, and which she was to receive from the very hands of her Son.

The Evangelists say nothing more of the holy Virgin until the time of our Saviour's Passion, except on two occasions: the first was when a good woman in the crowd, hearing with delight the preaching of Jesus Christ, exclaimed, "*Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the paps that gave you suck.*" "*Yea, rather,*" replied Jesus Christ, "*blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.*" In that, the Saviour did not deny that His mother was the most blessed of all women; the words, *yea, rather*, are indeed a confirmation of what the pious woman in her loving zeal had advanced; and as no other could ever aspire to the sublime dignity of Mother of God, no other being ever to attain to that degree of elevation, he does not insist further on the singular happiness of his mother; he takes occasion to make known to his hearers what happiness is proper to them, and to which they can aspire—to be docile to the voice of God, to have faith, and to animate that faith by works. "Behold," said he to them, "in what you should imitate my mother."

The Gospel again tells us, that when the holy Virgin

went to hear Jesus Christ, in the place where he was instructing the people, some one having told the Saviour that his mother was present, Jesus, stretching out his hand towards his disciples, said: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother."

This answer, which, under different circumstances, might have seemed a little curt, not to say harsh, was at once mysterious and necessary, regard being had to the disposition of his auditory. The Jews, to whom he announced the kingdom of heaven, looked upon him only as a mere man: "Is not this the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" said they, "and is not Mary his mother? do not his family dwell amongst us?" The Saviour, therefore, wished to teach them not to regard him *merely as the son of Mary*, but to recognize in his person that character of divinity which they chose not to acknowledge, although he manifested it so clearly by his words and by his works. He wished, further, to make them understand that, when there is question of the glory and the interests of God, we should no longer listen to flesh or blood; we should no longer consider either parents or friends, or any thing that is dearest to us, but we should prefer the interests of our eternal salvation to every thing earthly, how near and dear soever it may be.

EXAMPLE.

The village girl loaded with favors, as the reward of her love for Mary.

In a village near Florence, there was born a young girl, the daughter of poor parents, named Dominica.

From her childhood she honored the holy Virgin, fasted with that intention every day in the week, and on Saturdays distributed amongst the poor the food of which she had deprived herself. She placed the flowers of her garden before the image of Mary, who, from her earliest youth, loaded her with the most signal favors. At the age of ten years, being one day at the window, she saw in the street a beautiful woman, holding by the hand a child whose feet and breast were wounded. "Who has wounded that child?" asked Dominica. "Love," replied the mother. Dominica, charmed with the beauty of the child, asked him if his wounds were painful. He made no answer, but the mother said: "Tell me, my daughter, what induced you to crown those images with flowers?" "My love for Jesus and for Mary," replied the girl. On the instant, the holy Virgin appeared under the form of a great queen, surrounded by light: the child shone like a sun. He took those same flowers, and laid them on the head of Dominica, who, recognizing in these august personages *Jesus* and *Mary*, had prostrated herself before them. Thus ended the vision. Dominica subsequently took the habit of Saint Dominic, and died in the odor of sanctity, in the year 1553. (*Collection of Examples.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Brinolf, Bishop of Sweden.)

Protest often to the holy Virgin that you will love her more than your own life, in imitation of Saint Brinolf, Bishop of Sweden, of whom she said, speaking to Saint Bridget: "Behold one who, whilst he lived, loved me more than his own life."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople.)

Remember thy servants, O holy Virgin ! second their prayers, confirm their faith, recall the churches to unity, render this kingdom triumphant, make peace to reign in the world; deliver us from all danger, and one day obtain for us the eternal reward. Amen.

SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE SUFFERINGS OF THE HOLY VIRGIN DURING
THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Call me not Noëmi, that is, beautiful; but call me Mara, that is, bitter, for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness.”—*Ruth*, i.

SWEET as were the joy and consolation of the holy Virgin, on witnessing the wonders worked by the Saviour in Galilee and Judea, the thought of his Passion and of the death that he was to suffer for the redemption of mankind was continually present to her mind, and, as the holy fathers say, drowned her heart in a sea of bitterness. The more she saw his wisdom admired, his miracles published and applauded, and the more she learned of the reputation of her divine Son throughout all Syria, the more also was her heart afflicted, thinking that that dear Son, her delight and the delight of the eternal Father, was one day to be filled with opprobrium, and to die ignominiously on the cross. It was that, well acquainted with all the mysteries of the redemption, she saw beforehand, with bitter grief, the time appointed for that bloody sacrifice; and as each day brought the term of it nearer, her heart also suffered every day: every day presented it to her mind even in its most minute details, and every day, therefore, brought her heart a new torment.

The time of her Son's Passion being come, Mary repaired to Jerusalem almost at the same time as he, that is to say, six or seven days before the Paschal feast. She retired to the house of Mary, mother of Mark, her relative, and thence witnessed the superficial and evanescent triumph with which the Saviour was received in Jerusalem. The most melancholy tragedy was soon to follow the enthusiasm testified by the people on the arrival of Jesus Christ; therefore, the cry of *Hosannah* which resounded through the city, very far from soothing, increased the bitterness of her heart; she knew that it would soon be changed into shouts of execration. Her despair may well be imagined when she learned that Jesus Christ was arrested, and that they were dragging him from one tribunal to another as an infamous malefactor! Never did a mother more grievously feel the cruel treatment which a beloved son was made to undergo: the whole Church agrees that there never was a more afflicted mother. All the holy fathers coincide in saying that she alone suffered more than all the martyrs together, which has so justly entitled her to be styled their queen—*regina martyrum*; and that, without a miracle, she never could have survived the grievous and ignominious passion of that adorable Son. She took no measures to protest against that unheard-of accumulation of injustice, opprobrium, calumny, and torture inflicted upon the Saviour, because, having herself offered him to the eternal Father as a victim on the day of his presentation, she had, as it were, consented to his death for the salvation of men; and thence it was that she maintained an absolute silence during the whole course of his passion. She even resolved, with a supernatural courage, that was far beyond her sex, to accom-

pany him to Calvary, and assist at his death at the foot of the cross, according to the inscrutable designs of divine Providence. Judge what that sacrifice must have cost her ; all that the cruelty of the executioners inflicted on the bodies of the martyrs was little, and might be counted as nothing, exclaims Saint Anselm, if compared, O holy Virgin, with what you suffered at the death of your Son on Calvary ; those, says Saint Jerome, were martyrs, because they died for Jesus Christ ; but Mary was still more grievously so, in dying with Jesus, or, rather, in surviving Jesus ; because she loved her Son more than all the others, continues the same Saint Jerome, she also suffered more in seeing him suffer, in-somuch that her whole soul was penetrated with sorrow. In the other martyrs, says Saint Bernard, the great love which they had for God softened the pain inflicted by their tormentors ; but the extreme love of the holy Virgin for her dear Son constituted her martyrdom, and the *agonizing Passion of the Son* was, in every particular, the *agonizing Passion of the Mother*.

The very sight of Jesus Christ on the cross formed the consolation of all the martyrs, but in regard to the holy Virgin, that mournful object formed her most cruel torment. Jesus Christ consoled and even crowned with interior joy all the martyrs in the midst of the greatest torments, and, frequently, even suspended in their favor the activity of the fire in the cauldrons of molten lead and in the glowing furnaces ; but, as regards the holy Virgin, Jesus Christ, suffering and dying, turns not away from his Mother the bitter cup of which he, on the contrary, made her share, in making her feel the sight of his sufferings. It is for her, says Saint Bernard, a sea of bitterness in which her heart is plunged. "Judge

of the greatness of her sorrow, says that holy doctor, by the greatness of her love ; she alone has suffered more in her soul than all the martyrs together suffered in their body. And, certainly, says Saint Bernardine of Sienna, the pain of the Blessed Virgin, seeing her Son expiring on the cross, was so lively, so extraordinary, that if it had been divided amongst all creatures capable of feeling, not one of them but must have died by the mere portion of what Mary suffered of herself. Her tender and compassionate love wrought in the soul of Mary, says Arnaud de Chartres, that which nails, whips, the thorns, and the spear wrought on the body of her adorable Son. Your Son, O holy Virgin, suffered in body, and you in soul, exclaims Saint Bonaventure, but all those wounds distributed over the several members of his body were all inflicted on your heart. It is true, then, most blessed Virgin, concludes Saint Bernard, that your soul was really transpierced with grief.

As it was through love for the salvation of men that the holy Virgin suffered that grievous martyrdom, which has been justly styled her passion, all the faithful have ever had a particular devotion to honor that passion of the holy Virgin under the title of "Our Lady of Pity," or that of the "Compassion of the Holy Virgin," or "Our Lady of the Seven Dolors." The Holy See has approved its office and its festival. We shall return to this subject on the day of its celebration in the Church, which is appointed for the Friday of the fifth week of Lent.

EXAMPLE.

Heroic sacrifice of a mother in favor of the assassin of her son, made in honor of the sufferings of Mary.

A lady, who had an only son, was informed that he had been killed, and that the murderer had, unwittingly, taken refuge in her own palace. The afflicted mother, remembering that Mary had pardoned the executioners of Jesus, determined also to pardon this unhappy man, in honor of the sufferings of Mary. And not only did she forgive him, but she provided him with a horse, money, and clothes, in order that he might the more easily escape. After an act so generous, her son appeared to her, told her that he was saved, and that, in consideration of her conduct towards his murderer, the Mother of God had delivered him from purgatory, where, otherwise, he must long have suffered. (From a work entitled, *The Secret of obtaining all sorts of Graces.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Colette.)

Compassionate the holy Virgin in the pains she suffered during the passion of her Son ; how is it possible for a soul that loves Mary not to compassionate her griefs ? The holy Virgin, speaking to Saint Bridget, complained that there were so few Christians who cordially loved her, since there were so few who compassionated her pains. (Saint Colette was very faithful to this pious practice.)

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernard.)

Thou art, in truth, O Mary, that strong woman in whom the Lord found his rest, and whom he made the depositary of all his treasures. The universe honors thy chaste womb as the true temple of God, wherein the salvation of the world began, and the reconciliation between God and man was effected ; thou art that orchard into which the sinner enters not, to steal ; thou art that fair garden wherein God has planted all the flowers that adorn his Church,—amongst others, the violet of thy humility and the rose of thy charity. O mother of grace and goodness, to whom can we compare thee ? Thou art the paradise of God ; from thee springs the living fountain which waters the earth ; but, above all, how many benefits did not the world receive when, by thy sufferings, thou didst merit, on Calvary, to be the saving aqueduct of all mankind ! Grant us to feel its happy effects, so that, washed in its pure waters, we may one day be introduced into that eternal kingdom which nothing defiled can enter. Amen.

EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE LIFE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ON CALVARY.

“My son, my son, who would grant me that I might die for thee.”—*Second Book of Kings*, chap. xviii.

As the time approached for the passion of Jesus Christ, Mary's eyes were always full of tears, as she thought of the beloved Son whom she was about to lose, as to this world ; a cold sweat bedewed her limbs, from her agonizing fear of that terrible scene now so near at hand. The day having at length arrived, Jesus took leave of his mother, to go forth to death. The disciples of Jesus Christ, by turns, repaired to that afflicted mother, to give her tidings of their Master, but they brought her only alarming news, none that could give her consolation. One told her of the ill usage that Jesus had received in the house of Caiphas ; another, of the contemptuous treatment he had undergone at the court of Herod. Then came Saint John, and informed her that the unjust Pilate, while confessing the innocence of the Saviour, had condemned him to die upon the cross. “Ah ! unfortunate mother,” said Saint John, “your Son has been condemned to death, and is already on his way to Calvary, carrying his own cross : if you would see him again, and bid him a last farewell, hasten to the road by which he must pass.”

Mary set out with Saint John, and the traces of blood pointed out to her the way that her Son had taken. What evil things she hears said of him ! what insults directed against herself ! But her grief was at its height when she saw the nails, the hammers, the ropes, and all the instruments of the most ignominious death ; the herald who proclaimed, with sound of trumpet, the sentence pronounced against Jesus, the executioner who followed him, the people running in crowds, all that dread array rent the heart of Mary. She at length perceives a young man all covered with blood, whose body presents but one wound from head to foot ; he is crowned with thorns, and his shoulders are loaded with a heavy cross ; she looks at him, and scarce recognizes him ; the wounds, the bruises, and the blood with which he is covered, give him the aspect of a leper ; her love alone can enable her to recognize in that disfigured and bloody image, *the most beautiful of the children of men*. "What love and what terror," says Saint Peter of Alcantara, "must then have filled the heart of Mary !" On the one hand, she yearned to see him ; on the other, she could not dare to contemplate such a pitiable object, so deserving of compassion. Jesus cleared his eyes of the blood which obscured them ; he looked upon his Mother, and the Mother looked upon her Son : sorrowful glances, which, like so many arrows, pierced those precious souls so closely united one with the other.

When Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas More, met her father on the way to execution, she could only say to him these words, "Oh, my father, my father," and fell senseless at his feet. Mary, at sight of her Son on his way to Calvary, did not faint, for it was not fitting that that divine Mother should lose the use of her reason,

says Suarez ; she did not die, because God had a greater grief still in store for her : but if she did not die, her grief was sufficient to kill her a thousand times.

Mary attempted to embrace Jesus : the soldiers repulsed her. Holy Virgin, whither are you going ? To Calvary ? Will you have strength to behold him who is your life fastened to the cross ? But although the sight of the death of Jesus must have caused his mother the most frightful anguish, yet Mary would not desert him ; the Son goes before, and the Mother follows, to be also crucified with him. Let us compassionate her pangs, and endeavor to accompany the holy Virgin and her Son, bearing with patience the cross which the Lord sends us.

When our divine Saviour reached the place of torment, the executioners stripped him of his garments, and fastened to the cross his adorable hands and feet : having crucified him, they retired, and left him there to die. The executioners abandon him, but it is not so with Mary ; she then draws nearer to the cross, to be present at his death. Why, O my Queen ! exclaims Saint Bonaventure, why go upon Calvary to witness the death of that beloved Son ? Should you not have been restrained by shame, since his disgrace was also yours ? To see a God crucified by his own creatures ! Should not the horror of so great a crime have kept you away ? No. You forget your own griefs to think only of the death of your dear Son. You will be present to compassionate his sufferings. Ah ! true mother, nothing, not even the fear and the horrors of death, can separate you from your beloved Son ! What a cruel spectacle !—that Son, so dear to his mother, in agony on the cross, and under that same cross the agonizing mother suffering the same tortures as her Son.

Indeed, all the pains of Jesus Christ were so many wounds in the heart of Mary. There were on Calvary, says St. John Chrysostom, two altars, whereon were consummated two sacrifices, one in the body of Jesus Christ, the other in the heart of Mary ; or, rather, there was but one single altar,—that is to say, the Son's cross, on which two victims were at once immolated, the Son and the Mother. O Mary, where are you ? Are you close to the cross ? Ah ! I may say, far more correctly, that you are on the cross, to sacrifice yourself with your Son !

Mothers avoid the presence of their dying sons ; but if ever a mother is obliged to assist her son in his last moments, she supplies him with every thing that can possibly relieve or mitigate ; she does all she can to soothe and comfort him ; but you, O Mary, oh ! most afflicted of all mothers, you are present with the dying Jesus without power even to relieve him. Mary hears her Son complain of thirst, and she is not allowed to give him a drop of water to quench that thirst. "Son, I have no water but my tears !" are the words ascribed to the Blessed Virgin on that occasion by Saint Vincent Ferrier. She saw that, fastened by nails on that bed of pain, her Son could find no rest there ; she wanted to embrace him, says St. Bernard, but in vain did she extend her arms towards him.

The grief of Mary was still further increased when she heard Jesus complain upon the cross that even the Eternal Father had abandoned him ; she could offer him no consolation, and her own torments did but add to the sufferings of that divine Son. Jesus suffered yet more from compassion for his mother than from all his other pains, so that *Mary lived dying, yet unable to die.*

It was a matter of wonder that neither words nor

complaints of any kind escaped Mary. Mary spoke not, but how expressive was her silence ! Her heart offered to divine justice the life of her Son for our salvation ; by the merits of her pains, she will co-operate in our being born anew into the life of grace, so that we are the children of her sorrows. If, in that sea of sadness, there was any relief for the heart of Mary, it was the knowledge that, by means of those same griefs, she procured our eternal salvation. In effect, such were the last words of Jesus, the last pledge of his love for us ; he left us Mary for our mother, declaring us her children in the person of Saint John. Mary began thenceforward to fulfil the office of mother to us ; it was by her prayers that the penitent thief was converted and saved : ever since then, Mary ceases not, and never will cease, to contribute to our salvation.

EXAMPLE.

Devotion to the Sufferings of Mary is a Germ of Salvation.

A great lord, who led a very bad life, had given himself to the devil, and had served him for sixty years : when his death was at hand, Jesus Christ, in order to show him mercy, ordered Saint Bridget to send her confessor to visit him, and exhort him to confess his sins. The priest went accordingly, and the sick man replied that he had no need of confession. The confessor went again, and again the slave of the devil repulsed him. A third time the confessor returned, told the sick man the revelation which had been made to the saint, and announced to him that the Lord was willing to forgive him. Hearing that, the sick man was softened even to

tears. "But how can I be saved," he exclaimed, "I who for sixty years have served the devil, whose slave I had become ; I who committed such numberless sins?" "My son," replied the priest, "doubt it not ; if you repent, I promise you pardon on the part of God himself." The nobleman then began to feel some confidence, and said to the confessor, "Father, I believed myself damned, and despaired of salvation, but now I feel a sorrow for my sins that inspires me with confidence. Since, then, God has not yet abandoned me, I will confess." And that very day he confessed four times with great contrition ; on the following day he received holy communion, and six days after he died contented and resigned. After his death, it was declared by Jesus Christ to Saint Bridget that the sinner was in purgatory, and that he was saved by the intercession of Mary, his mother, because, in the midst of his wickedness, he had always cherished a devotion to the sufferings of Mary, and never thought of them without compassion. (*Works of Saint Bridget.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Bernard.)

That great servant of Mary, Saint Bernard, practised all manner of devotions to the holy Virgin, but he was specially devoted to her sufferings, which he could not think of without tears ; and it was that salutary practice which merited for him so many special graces and favors, as we see in his Life.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Alphonso Liguori.)

O mother of grief, Queen of martyrs and of sufferings, thou didst weep so much for thy Son, who died for my salvation ! But what will thy tears avail me, if I am so unfortunate as to damn myself ? By the merits of thy woes and pains, obtain for me, then, a true repentance for my sins, and a true change of life, with a tender compassion for thy sufferings and the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus and thou, although innocent, suffered so much for me, let me also suffer something for thy love, I who, by my sins, have deserved hell. O my divine mother, I implore thee, by the affliction thou enduredst in seeing thy Son bow down his head and expire upon the cross, obtain for me a good death. Ah ! fail not to aid my afflicted and struggling soul in that great passage from life to death ! Perhaps I shall not then be able to invoke with my lips Jesus and Mary : I invoke them now beforehand, and I conjure thee, O holy object of my hope, that thou assist me at that last moment. Amen.

NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION : THE HOLY VIRGIN IS PRESENT AT THE DEATH OF HER SON, AND ASSISTS AT HIS OBSEQUIES.

"Thou shalt be filled with the cup of grief and sadness, and thou shalt drink it even to the dregs."—*Ezekiel*, xxiii.

It suffices to tell a mother that her son is dead, to excite all her love for that son whom she has lost. Her grief is sometimes diminished by the trouble and annoyance he has caused her ; but Mary had not even that sad consolation ; Jesus was always the most respectful, the most obedient, the most amiable of all sons. Who, then, can comprehend the immense grief of Mary ? "I present to you, O my God," she said to the eternal Father, "the spotless soul of my Son and thine, who hath obeyed thee even unto death. Thy justice is entirely satisfied, and thy will accomplished." Mary contemplated the body of her Son, and said, "Oh ! wounds caused by love, I adore you ! It is by you that salvation has been granted to the world : you will remain open to be the refuge of all those who have recourse to you : oh, how many sinners will through you receive the pardon of their sins, and ardently covet the sovereign good !"

The Jews would have the body of Jesus to be immediately taken down from the cross ; but as it was not

lawful to take down criminals until their death was ascertained, the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with the Saviour. At that sight Mary shuddered, and said to them, "Alas ! my Son is already dead ! beware that you insult him no further ; spare me, his mother, that torment." At that moment, a soldier pierced the heart of Jesus with a spear. The insult of that thrust was inflicted on the body of Jesus Christ, but his mother felt the pain. The holy fathers think that this is properly the sword spoken of in the predictions of St. Simeon to Mary, "*a sword not of steel but of grief,*" which pierced *her soul in the heart of Jesus*, where it ever dwelt.

Mary, fearing new insults for her Son, entreated Joseph of Arimathea to obtain from Pilate the body of Jesus, so as to secure it from all outrage after death. Pilate consented, and the Saviour's body was taken down from the cross. O holy Virgin, you so lovingly gave up your Son to the world for our salvation ; the world restores him to you, but in what a state ! He has lost all his beauty, he is quite disfigured ! "Oh, how many swords," says Saint Bonaventure, "pierced the soul of that divine Mother when they presented to her the body of her Son, taken down from the cross !" Mary clasps in her arms the body of Jesus, contemplates his wounds, and says, "O my Son, to what a condition has thy love for men reduced thee ! What evil hadst thou done that they should treat thee thus ?" If Mary were still susceptible of pain, what would she say to us ? what trouble would she not have, seeing that men, after the death of her Son, continue to lacerate and crucify him by their sins !

When a mother is present at the torment and death of

her son, she feels and suffers all his pains; but when, after his death, they go to bury him, and that afflicted mother is about to be separated from him, the thought that she shall see him no more is a grief that absorbs all others. Such was the state of Mary when, after being present at the crucifixion of Jesus, after having embraced him when he was dead, she had at last to leave him in the sepulchre. "My dear Son," said she, "all thy fine qualities, thy virtues, thy beauty, thy amiable manners, the special marks of love thou hast given me, the singular favors I have received from thee, all is changed into so many poisoned arrows; for the more ardent my love for thee, the more I feel now the pain of having lost thee. Ah, my beloved Son, in losing thee I have lost all!" Such is the language attributed to her by Saint Bernard.

Mary's grief consumed her, as she held her Son in her arms: the disciples fearing lest the poor mother should expire, hastened to remove him from her sight, and bury him. They tore him from her, and having embalmed him, they wrapped him in a shroud, on which the Lord was pleased to leave the impression of his countenance (which is still to be seen at Turin). The disciples bear him on their shoulders; the angels hasten from heaven to range themselves in the train, which was accompanied by the holy women, with the afflicted mother in their midst. When they arrived at the sepulchre, Mary could willingly have buried herself alive therein, with her Son; but as such was not the will of God, she followed the sacred body "even to the sepulchre, wherein were placed," says Baronius, "the nails and the crown of thorns." The sufferings of Mary were more poignant than ever, when she was obliged to leave the tomb.

The sepulchre was closed, but Mary had left her heart buried there with Jesus, for Jesus was all her treasure. Before departing from the tomb she blessed it, saying: "O blessed rock, that now contains him whom for nine months I bore in my womb, I bless thee, and I envy thy lot. In thee I deposit that Son who is all my wealth, all my love. Eternal Father! he is thy Son and mine—to thee I commend him."

Having thus bid a last farewell to her Son and the sepulchre, she returned home in a state of affliction pitiable to look upon. The disciples wept over her even more than over Jesus. The holy women had wrapped her, as a widow, in a mourning cloak, which covered nearly all her face. Mary, passing before the cross, covered with the blood of Jesus, was the first to adore it: "O holy cross!" she exclaimed, "I kiss thee and I adore thee, for thou art now no longer the wood of infamy but a tree of love, and an altar of mercy, consecrated by the blood of that Lamb of God who has just been sacrificed for the salvation of the world." She leaves the cross, and returns to her dwelling; there, in her affliction, she retraces in her mind the admirable life and the cruel death of Jesus. She recalls the cares and caresses she had bestowed upon her Son in the stable at Bethlehem; his reciprocating affection; the words of eternal life that had fallen from his divine lips; and the conversations she had had with him in the house at Nazareth. She still imagines she beholds the terrible scene of his Passion, the nails, the thorns, the torn flesh of her Son; she contemplates his gaping wounds, his bones laid bare, his open mouth, his eyes fast closed in death. Ah! what a cruel sight! Mary wept unceasingly, and, with her, all those who were present; and thus afflicted she continued to be,

until she saw her divine Son risen, glorious and triumphant.

EXAMPLE.

Those who are devout to the sufferings of Mary, during life, shall enjoy great comfort at their death.

The blessed Joachim Piccolomini, celebrated for his tender devotion to Mary, began, from his childhood, to visit thrice every day an image of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. In her honor, he abstained from food on Saturday; and he rose at midnight to meditate on her griefs. The holy Virgin rewarded him. First, she appeared to him when he was young, and told him to enter into the order of her servants, which he did. Towards the end of his life, she showed him two crowns;—the one of ruby, in reward of the compassion he had always had for her sorrows; the other of pearls, in return for his purity, which he had consecrated to her. Finally, at her last appearance, the blessed Piccolomini asked the favor of her that he might die on the same day as Jesus Christ. "Prepare thyself," said Mary, "for to-morrow, Friday, thou shalt die suddenly, according to thy desire, and thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And so it happened that on the following day, whilst they were chanting in the church the Passion according to Saint John: at the words, "There stood by the cross Mary, his mother," Joachim swooned; and at that other passage, "Bowing his head, he gave up the ghost," he expired; and the church was filled with a great light and a most delicious odor.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(Mentioned by Saint Alphonso Liguori.)

Jesus Christ has attached many graces to devotion to the sufferings of Mary. We are warranted in believing that when Mary asked of her Son some special grace for those who should honor her sufferings, Jesus promised her for them four principal ones : 1. That they should have before their death a true sorrow for their sins. 2. That they should be succored in their tribulations, and especially at the hour of their death. 3. That he would deeply impress their hearts with the memory of his Passion, that he might afterwards reward them in heaven. 4. That he would give them in charge to Mary, that she might dispose of them, and obtain for them all the graces she should see fit.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(Saint Alphonso Liguori.—*Glories of Mary.*)

O afflicted mother, I will not leave thee to weep alone ; I will mingle my tears with thine. I this day ask of thee to obtain for me a continual and tender remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ and thine, so that all the days I have yet to live may be employed in weeping over thy sorrows. O my mother, O mother of the Redeemer, grant that those sufferings of thine may give me confidence at the hour of my death ; that I may not despair at the sight of my sins ; that they may obtain for me now the grace of perseverance, and, hereafter, the paradise where I shall be with thee, to sing the infinite mercies of my God and thine. Amen.

TENTH EXERCISE.

FOR SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE HOLY VIRGIN SEES JESUS RESUSCITATED ; SHE IS PRESENT AT HIS ASCENSION, AND RECEIVES THE HOLY GHOST.

“My son liveth, and his dominion extends over all the earth.”—*Genesis*, xlv.

AFTER the great work of our redemption was accomplished, the holy Virgin retired to Jerusalem, to the house of Mary the mother of Mark, where the Saviour is believed to have made his last supper with his apostles ; she there passed the three days before the resurrection, in the most sublime contemplation on all the mysteries which had been accomplished and those which were to follow. It cannot be doubted that at the moment when Jesus Christ arose, he appeared at the same instant to his mother, to console her for all that she had suffered during his Passion on Calvary ; what demonstrates this truth is, that in all the history, detailed as it is, of the Saviour's resurrection and his apparitions, no mention is made of apparitions to his mother. Had it not been so, Jesus would not have failed to distinguish her the first time he appeared to all his assembled disciples, with whom the blessed Virgin was present.

The Saviour ordered Magdalen, and the other holy women to whom he first appeared after his resurrection, to go and tell Peter, in particular, and his other disci-

ples, that he had risen ; would he not at the same time have ordered them to bear the glad tidings to his mother, had he not himself informed her the first ? If it be asked, says Saint Anselm, why the Gospel makes no mention of this privileged apparition to the Mother of God, it is, answers that saint, because the gospel says nothing useless or superfluous ; and it would be useless to say that the risen Saviour appeared to his mother before he appeared to the other women and his disciples ; for we cannot think of her quality of mother, her tenderness, the share she had in his Passion, and the love the Saviour had for her, without being convinced that she was the first to see her adorable Son after his resurrection. “Just,” continues Saint Anselm, “as it would have been quite superfluous to say in the Gospel that Jesus Christ tenderly loved his mother, of which fact, likewise, the Gospel makes no mention, whilst it speaks so often of the predilection which Jesus Christ had for Saint John. But that beloved disciple says that our Lord appeared first to Magdalen. “That must be understood,” says the Abbé Rupert, “in relation to the witnesses chosen by God to publish in the world the great mystery of the resurrection, according as it is said in the Acts of the Apostles : “Not to all the people, but to witnesses preordained of God.” (*Acts*, chap. x.)

If it was impossible to express all the affliction of the holy Virgin at the ignominious death of her Son, it is still more so to describe the ineffable joy of that blessed Mother at his Resurrection ! If the heart of Mary had been plunged in a sea of bitterness throughout his Passion, the Resurrection filled her heart with an incomprehensible joy ; she not only had the consolation of seeing

Jesus as often as he appeared to his assembled disciples, but how many times had she the pleasure of conversing familiarly with him in his apparitions to herself! Then, indeed, she enjoyed that torrent of delight wherewith the blessed are inundated in heaven.

Forty days after the Resurrection, the holy Virgin, who had repaired to Jerusalem to be present at the glorious Ascension of her Son, attended him, with all his disciples, to the Mount of Olives: that was the place that Jesus Christ had chosen to ascend to heaven, to go seat himself at the right hand of his God and his Father. It was on the summit of that holy mountain that the Saviour gave his last instructions to the august assemblage that surrounded him; blessed it, lavished upon his Mother marks of the most tender affection, and was slowly lifted up while all eyes remained fixed upon him, until a luminous cloud concealed him from their sight.

The human mind is too limited to comprehend the feelings of the Son and the Mother at the moment of their separation. All that can be said is, that Mary's body still remained on earth, while her spirit ascended with Jesus Christ to heaven. She retired with the apostles to await the descent of the Holy Ghost, whose coming she no doubt hastened in some degree by the ardor of her desires and the fervor of her prayers: she received him ten days after with a new plenitude and superabundance of graces.

A most holy soul, endowed with the most sublime gifts of contemplation, has left it upon record that *that marvellous flame*, under the figure of which the Holy Ghost appeared on the day of Pentecost, first rested whole upon the head of the holy Virgin, and that after-

wards it divided into as many *tongues of fire* as there were persons in the room, so as to rest upon their heads. That circumstance, which appears extremely probable, is a most expressive symbol, indicating that Mary alone received on that day as many graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost as all the others together. So had she interior dispositions more perfect than all the others ; and as the eternal Father had distinguished her by so marked a predilection from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, in quality of his well-beloved daughter, it was fitting, say the fathers of the Church, that the Holy Ghost should also distinguish her as his spouse, by a superabundance of gifts.

EXAMPLE.

Practices of devotion to Mary are sooner or later rewarded.

In the history of the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer, the following narrative is given by one of the fathers belonging to that pious society. "During a mission," says he, "after our customary sermon on Mary, an old man came to me to hear his confession. He was full of contentment, and said to me: 'Father, the holy Virgin has done me a favor.' 'And what favor has she done you?' I asked. 'Ah, you must know, father, that, thirty years ago, I made a sacrilegious confession, by concealing a sin. Since then I have been exposed to great perils, and my life has been several times in danger. Had I died in that state, I should certainly have been damned. Now, Mary has touched my heart;" and he shed many tears. The priest, after hearing his confession, asked him what devotion he had had. He answered,

that he had never passed a Saturday without abstaining from milk food, in honor of Mary; and that thus she had been touched with compassion for him. He gave the father permission to publish this fact, which proves how Mary rewards the least things done with a view to please her. (*History of the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY

(By Saint Henry, Emperor.)

Visit the churches dedicated to the holy Virgin. It is related of Saint Henry, the emperor, that when he entered a city, he first went to pay his homage to the holy Virgin in some of the churches consecrated to her.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernard.)

O our powerful sovereign! come to the aid of our weakness. Speak for us, to our Lord Jesus Christ: who can do it better than thou, who didst so intimately converse with him here on earth, and who now so fully possessest him in heaven? Speak to thy Son for us, O our holy lady! for he listens to thee, and thou art sure of obtaining from him all thou wilt. Ask for us a great love of God, perseverance in his holy grace, and the happiness of dying in his friendship, in order that we may see thee and bless thee with him eternally. Amen.

ELEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE LATTER YEARS OF THE HOLY VIRGIN
UPON EARTH.

“Woe is me! that my sojourning is prolonged.”—*Ps. cxix.*

It was the will of God that the holy Virgin should *remain on earth* many days after the glorious ascension of her divine Son into heaven: the reason was, according to the holy fathers, that she might be the mother of the infant Church, and the sweetest consolation of the apostles,—Jesus Christ having promised them that he would not leave them orphans. The joy she experienced in seeing so many miracles wrought in the name of her divine Son, and learning the rapidity with which his kingdom was extending throughout the world, was un-mixed with bitterness, save that which was caused by the fury wherewith all the powers of the earth attacked the faithful, whether converted from Judaism or paganism. They sought to stifle the Church in its cradle, but Jesus Christ had promised that, notwithstanding all the efforts of the devil, the gates of hell should never prevail against the house of the living God, founded upon the solid rock; and the holy Virgin also knew that the blood of the martyrs was to be as the seed of the Church; that the more they were put to death, the more they re-appeared.

Mary remained at Jerusalem till the time when the apostles were obliged to depart thence, during the per-

secution in the year 44 of Jesus Christ; then Saint John, who had taken her to his home, and had never ceased to regard her as his mother, conducted her to Ephesus. It is not exactly known how long she remained in that city, but it is certain that she returned to Jerusalem before her death.

Mary received communion every day. How, indeed, could a soul so pure and holy deprive itself of that bread of angels, which formed the daily nourishment of the faithful, in the early days of the Church? Each communion was accompanied by an ecstasy, which left her nothing to envy those who were already in the abode of the blest. All the faithful had recourse to her in their necessities; and there is no doubt that the apostles frequently consulted her, and profited by her supernatural enlightenment, which led the learned Idiot to say that she taught the doctors, and, in some sort, gave lessons even to the apostles. The Abbé Rupert, in his first book on the Canticles, says that the holy Virgin may be called the fountain of the gardens, and the well of living water; and that her enlightenment was adequate to all, because the Holy Ghost, who had given himself sparingly to the disciples, had communicated himself to her without reserve. The holy fathers all agree, that it was the holy Virgin who gave to Saint Luke those admirable details of many circumstances of the infancy of Jesus Christ, recorded in the first chapters of the Gospel: no one could be better acquainted with them than she.

"The life of Mary," says Saint Ambrose, "is the model and the rule of life for persons of every state and condition." It is not, in fact, with Mary, as with certain chosen souls whose merit consists in some particu-

lar virtues. Let us study the life of the holy Virgin: it is a universal lesson. Regulating our conduct by hers, we shall learn to love God above all things; to be just towards our neighbor, to abide in purity and innocence, to hate ourselves, to be modest, humble, submissive, and religious. Fathers and mothers, thinking of the Mother of God, will apply themselves to bring up their children in piety; each one, in fine, will endeavor to sanctify themselves in that condition wherein it shall have pleased God to place them. The Church had spread itself almost everywhere, notwithstanding the cruel persecutions which hell raised up against the faithful. After that sweet consolation, the holy Virgin saw with joy the approach of the day when she was to go and rejoin her Son in heaven. She was then seventy-two years of age, according to the generally received opinion.

Some ancient Fathers, amongst others Saint Epiphanius, seem to doubt whether the Mother of God did really die, and apparently believe that she remained immortal, because she was taken up body and soul to heaven. Her Immaculate Conception and her Divine Maternity might seem to authorize this doubt; but the Church plainly declares, in the Mass for the day of the Assumption, and it is the common opinion, that the Virgin really died, according to the condition of the flesh; and, certainly, Jesus Christ not having chosen to dispense himself from death, we cannot believe that Mary was exempt therefrom. Saint John Damascene says, with the other holy Fathers, that we cannot call her decease a death, but that we should rather call it a sweet sleep, a more intimate union with her God, a passage from a mortal life to a blessed immortality. Most of the ancient authors entitled their treatises on the death of the holy Virgin,

De Bormitione, or "Of the sleep." The truth is, it was neither the decrepitude of life nor the decline of age, neither the violence of disease nor the derangement of the humors, nor debility, say the holy fathers, which, in her case, severed the natural connection between the soul and the body ; it was the fire of pure divine love which caused that separation for some hours. "It required," says Saint Bernard, "one continued miracle, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, to enable those natural ties to subsist, together with the ardent fire wherewith the soul of the holy Virgin was constantly inflamed. The day, the hour, the happy moment when she was to terminate her mortal life having arrived, God no longer suspended the effect of that sacred flame ; He allowed it to act in its full force on that spotless heart, the sanctuary of divine love. *Then, the holy body of Mary, being no longer able to bear the efforts of that flame, burned, consumed by divine ardor, ended without pain that most pure and holy life." Thus the holy Virgin lived, according to Saint Bernard, but by miracle, and it was by the ceasing of that miracle that her days ended. "She was not to die," says Saint Ildefonso, "or she was only to die of love."

EXAMPLE.

Mary rewards, as done for Herself, what is done for her Servants.

In a certain place, in the Papal States, a young servant of Mary met a brigand chief : fearing to be insulted by him, she besought him for the love of the holy Virgin not to harm her. "As it is in the name of the Mother of God that you entreat me," replied the robber,

"fear nothing ; all I ask of you is that you will recommend me to her." And he accompanied her along the road until he saw her in a place of safety. The following night Mary appeared to this brigand in a dream, thanked him for the good action he had done for her sake, and told him that she would remember and reward it. Some time afterwards he fell into the hands of justice, and was condemned to death. The night before his execution, the holy Virgin appeared to him, and asked him first if he knew her ; the robber answered, that he believed he had seen her once before. "Yes," said Mary, "I am the Mother of God, I come to repay you for what you did for me. You shall die to-morrow ; but you will die with such contrition that you shall go straight to Paradise." At those words he awoke, and felt such a sorrow for his sins that he shed a torrent of tears, thanking the holy Virgin. He confessed with great signs of repentance, related his visit to the confessor, and begged him to publish everywhere the favor that Mary had bestowed on him. He went cheerfully to the scaffold, and after his death his face is said to have been like that of one of the blessed. (*Collection of Examples.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Blessed Himing.)

Have the pious custom of saying a brief prayer to Mary before commencing your actions. It is related in the revelations of St. Bridget that the blessed Himing, bishop, being accustomed to commence all his sermons by the praises of Mary, Mary herself appeared to the Saint, and charged her to tell that prelate that, on account of this devout practice, she would be to him as a

mother, would present his soul to God, and obtain for him the grace of a happy death : he accordingly died in the odor of sanctity and in heavenly peace.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Bernard.)

It is of the holy Virgin that it is said : "Thou art she who arisest as the dawn, fair as the moon, and chaste as the sun." O Mary, thou didst come into the world as a radiant dawn, and the light of thy sanctity preceded the coming of the Sun of justice ; the day of thine appearance in the world was, indeed, the day of glory and salvation. Thou art beautiful as the dawn. No creature more resembles God than thou, even as no planet more resembles the sun than the moon : by night, she shines with the light she borrows from him ; and thou, O Mary, thou dost light our darkness with the splendor of thy virtues. But thou art fairer than the moon, for in thee is found neither spot nor shadow ; thou art chosen as the sun, that is to say, as the Sun who created the sun ; he was chosen amongst all men, and thou wert chosen amongst all women, O great and sweet lady, O most amiable Mary ! None can utter thy name without feeling themselves inflamed with love for thee ; and those who love thee cannot think of thee without loving thee more and more. Grant me the grace to make me experience that feeling, I who desire to love thee so much on earth, that I may be able to love thee eternally in heaven. Amen. (*De Assump.*)

TWELFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

INSTRUCTION ON THE DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"Now, O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace: for it is better for me to die than to live."
—*Tobit*, chap. iii.

THE holy Virgin died at Jerusalem, in the house of Mary, mother of Mark. It is believed, that some days before the Lord sent to her the angel Gabriel, who had announced to her that she should become a mother. "Mary," said the ambassador of heaven, "God has granted your holy desires. He sends me to tell you to prepare to quit the earth, because he wants you with him in Paradise. Come, then, O my Queen! come, and take possession of your kingdom. Come, the whole celestial court desires and expects you!"

On hearing these happy tidings, Mary, the humblest of all creatures, repeated the same words she had said at his first embassy: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; it is purely by his goodness that he has chosen me to be his Mother; he calls me now to Paradise: I deserve none of these honors, but as he deigns to manifest in me his infinite liberality, I am ready to receive it; be it done unto me according to the will of my Lord and my God."

Mary, thus apprized of the day and the hour when she was to leave the earth, to go live eternally in heaven, made it known to the faithful who were at Jerusalem.

The announcement grieved them exceedingly, for, since the ascension of the Saviour, the holy Virgin had been the sole consolation of the Church. She likewise informed Saint John, her adopted son, who had never separated himself from her, but had constantly assisted her. Mary then paid a last visit to the holy places at Jerusalem. She was much affected on leaving them; but especially so on departing from Calvary, where her beloved Son laid down his life. She then shut herself in her cell to prepare for death. Here, seated on her little bed, she consoled the faithful, who groaned in anguish at the idea of a separation so cruel. The angels visited her continually, and rejoiced that they were soon to see her in heaven, crowned as their queen.

Many authors affirm, that prior to her death the apostles, and some of the disciples who were scattered in different parts of the earth, found themselves miraculously gathered together in her chamber, and that she said to them: "My children, it was for love of you, and to assist you, that my Son left me on earth; now that the holy faith is spread throughout the world, that the fruits of the divine Word are multiplied, the Lord my God sees that my presence is no longer necessary here below, and, compassionating my sorrows in this weary exile, he has granted my desire to depart this life and rejoin him in heaven. As for you, continue to labor for his glory. I leave you, but you shall be always present in my heart. I will always preserve the same love that I now bear to you. I will pray for you in Paradise."

The apostles and disciples, afflicted that they were so soon to be separated from that tender mother, said to her: "O Mary, it is true that this earth is no fitting

abode for you, and we are ourselves unworthy to enjoy the companionship of the Mother of God; but remember, that you are also our mother! Hitherto, you have been our light in our doubts, our consolation in our anguish, our strength in persecution; will you abandon us in the midst of so many enemies and of so many conflicts? We have already lost Jesus, our Master and our Father, who has ascended to heaven. Since that time we have found no consolation but in you; if we lose you also, we shall then be orphans indeed! O Mary! either remain with us, or take us with you!"

It is thus that Saint John Damascene makes them speak. "No, my children," the holy Virgin mildly replied, "no; such is not the will of God. Content yourselves with what he wills for you and for me. You must still labor here on earth for the glory of your Redeemer, and to gain your eternal crown. By leaving you I do not desert you, but that I may assist you the more, by my intercession with God in heaven. Remain in peace. To you I recommend the holy Church, and the souls redeemed by the blood of the Man-God. That is the memento which I leave you. If you love me, labor for souls and for the glory of my Son; because we shall be one day reunited in Paradise, to be never more separated."

Mary blessed them, awaited death, and with death the coming of her divine Spouse, who was to take her with him to the kingdom of eternal felicity and glory, which expectation filled her with the sweetest joy. The apostles seeing that Mary was on the point of leaving this world, prostrated themselves around her bed and implored her intercession. Mary ceased not to reassure them, to console, and animate them to convert the world.

She called Saint Peter the head of the Church, and the Vicar of Jesus Christ; she recommended to him, principally, the propagation of the faith, promising him a special protection. Then, remembering the zeal with which Saint John had served her, all the time she had lived after the death of her Son, she said to him: "I thank you, my dear son, for all the care you have bestowed upon me; be assured that I will not be ungrateful towards you. Remain at peace in this life, until we meet again in heaven, where I will await you. Forget me not in your necessities, call me to your assistance. I will always be mindful of you. I bless you, and I ask for you the most abundant graces."

Mary's death soon draws near : divine love penetrates with its ardent flames the heart of that celestial phoenix, it consumes all the vital spirits, and that incomparable creature is seen declining gradually towards her end. The angels came then in crowds to accompany their queen in her triumphal entry into Paradise, and Jesus Christ took his holy mother to conduct her to his blessed kingdom. It was revealed to Saint Elizabeth that that divine Son appeared to his mother, before she expired, bearing his cross in his hand, to show the special glory that he had drawn from the redemption, his death having acquired for him that admirable creature who was to do him more honor throughout eternity than all angels and men. Saint John Damascene adds, that Jesus Christ gave her the communion in form of viaticum, saying tenderly to her : "Receive, O my mother, from my own hand, the body which you gave me." Mary, having received that last communion, said to the Saviour of the world : "My Son, into thy hands I resign my spirit. I recommend to thee this soul, which by thy goodness

thou createdst, enriched with so many graces from the beginning, and preserved, by a singular privilege, from all stain of sin ; I commend to thee my body, in which thou deignedst to take flesh and blood ; and I commend to thee my dear children, thy disciples : they are grieved for my departure ; be thou their consoler, thou who lovest them still more than I ; bless them, and give them strength to do great things for thy glory."

When Mary reached the last moment of her life, says Saint Jerome, a delightful symphony was heard in her chamber, and a brilliant light was seen there. By these prodigies the apostles knew that Mary was near her death ; they redoubled their prayers, again implored her final benediction and that she would never forget them. Mary promised them and blessed them again : immediately after, death came, not clad in mourning, as to other mortals, but adorned with light and gladness. Mary feels such a lively transport of love, that she sinks and expires. Thus it was that that august and generous soul, that beautiful dove of the Lord, was freed from the bonds of this life, and passed to that celestial glory in which she reigns and will reign throughout all eternity. As soon as the holy Virgin had given up the ghost, each one present fell prostrate at her feet, respectfully kissing them, and bathing them with tears. All the faithful in Jerusalem and the vicinity hastened to do honor to that holy body, the sanctuary of the Word made flesh, fit object for the veneration of angels and of men. All the sick who presented themselves were cured ; and Saint John Damascene, who transmits to us what he had learned from the most ancient tradition, says that even the unconverted Jews felt the effects of her power, and had their share in its miracles.

After each one had gratified their devotion, the apostles removed the mortal remains to the hamlet of Gethsemani, the place of burial, some three or four hundred paces from Jerusalem; the faithful followed with lighted tapers, singing hymns and canticles, and the body was respectfully laid in the tomb prepared for it, which was then closed with a great stone.

Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who lived in the fifth century, writing to the Emperor Marcian and the pious Empress Pulcheria, says that the apostles, relieving each other, watched day and night with the faithful at the tomb, and mingled their hymns with those of the angels: for three days was heard unceasingly the same sweet music which had commenced at the very moment of the holy Virgin's death.

EXAMPLE.

Marvellous effects of a tender piety towards Mary.

Father de Nieremberg relates, in his work on Devotion to the holy Virgin, that a priest, who loved Mary much, felt so ardent a desire to see her that he earnestly besought her to grant him that favor. Mary heard his prayer, and sent an angel to tell him that she was going to favor him with her presence, but on condition that after having seen her he should become blind. The pious priest unhesitatingly accepted the condition. However, that he might not entirely lose his sight, he determined to look upon her first with one eye only; then, as he was about to look upon her with both eyes, the holy Virgin disappeared. Afflicted, not because he had lost the sight of one eye, but because he had not regarded Mary with both eyes, he entreated her to appear a second time, and consented to become blind.

Mary once more yielded to his supplication, and consoled him by again appearing to him ; but that amiable queen, far from depriving him of his remaining eye, restored to him the one he had lost.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Louis, king of France.)

Honor the Blessed Virgin in a particular manner on Saturdays, the day which is dedicated to her. Saint Louis, king of France, was accustomed on that day to wash the feet of the poor.

Following the example of that great servant of Mary, let us practise in her honor some works of charity or of mercy, every day if we can, but especially on Saturday.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(Saint Alphonso Liguori.—*Glories of Mary.*)

O Mary, thou hast quitted the earth, and hast reached that heaven where, as the Church sings, thou reignest over all the angelic choirs! We know we were not worthy, miserable sinners as we are, to see thee with us in this vale of darkness; but we also know, that in the midst of thy greatness, thou hast not forgotten us, poor and miserable though we be. Thine elevation has but served to increase thy compassion for us, children of Adam. From the height of thy celestial throne look down on us, O Mary, with eyes of mercy. Have pity on us, regard us, assist us, see to what tempests, to how many combats we are exposed, so long as we remain on earth! Obtain for us, by the holiness of thy death, perseverance in the grace of God, that when we depart from this life, we shall go to join the blessed spirits, and sing thy praises as thou deservest. Amen.

THIRTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

INSTRUCTION: HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE FEAST OF THE
ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN.

"Arise, O Lord, into thy resting-place: thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified."—*Ps. cxxxi.*

It is true, according to the constant tradition of the fathers of the Church, and the testimony of Juvenal, patriarch of Jerusalem, that the harmonious music of the angels was heard for three days at the tomb of the holy Virgin; but it is not precisely known how long her body remained in the sepulchre. Some believe that it was no sooner entombed than it was reunited to her soul, and miraculously taken up to heaven. But it appears more likely that it remained in the sepulchre three days, as did the body of her divine Son. What is certain, according to Saint John Damascene, and most of the Greek and Latin fathers, is, that Saint Thomas, the only one of the apostles who was not present at the death of the holy Virgin (God having so allotted it, in order to manifest her glorious assumption), having only arrived after the obsequies of that mother of the faithful, craved the consolation of seeing the holy body which for nine months had borne the Author of life. Believing it their duty to satisfy his devotion, they opened the tomb, and were agreeably surprised to find there only the grave-clothes in which it had been wrapped. These ex-

haled a delicious odor. Struck by so great a marvel, the faithful who were present closed the tomb again, convinced that the divine Word, who had deigned to take flesh and become man in the chaste womb of the Virgin, had not permitted that a body so pure should be subject to corruption; but that having resuscitated her three days after her death, thus anticipating the general resurrection, he had made her enter triumphantly into his glory.

Thus, the divine Word having preserved his mother ever pure, ever spotless, ever a virgin, also willed that that body, so pure and so holy, should be incorruptible, and enjoy immediately after death all the qualities of glorified bodies. Thus speaks Saint John Damascene. The providence of the Lord is manifest all through this history; for as God permitted that Saint Thomas should not be present, when all the other apostles and disciples were assembled, when Jesus Christ first appeared to them after his resurrection,—in order that that too incredulous apostle, putting his hand into the wound in the Saviour's side, and seeing with his own eyes the scars in his hands and in his feet, might furnish to all future ages an incontestable proof of the truth of his divine Master's resurrection,—so it seems that the Lord permitted Saint Thomas to be absent when the holy Virgin died, that he might be made the means of certifying the truth of her glorious assumption, body and soul, into heaven.

"Was it becoming," says Saint Augustine, in his discourse upon the assumption of Mary, "that the Saviour should leave in the tomb so pure a body, from which his own had been formed, a flesh which was in some sort his own? No, I could not believe," continues that holy doctor, "that the body in which the divine Word had

been made man should be given as a prey to worms and corruption : the very thought strikes me with horror." "Who could or would dare to believe," says the same St. Augustine, "that Jesus Christ, who preserved his mother's purity during her life, would not have preserved her from corruption after her death? Was the one more difficult to him than the other? And if the body of the predestined is to be eternally in heaven, can it be imagined that the sacred body of his blessed mother should remain on earth till the end of time? The divine Saviour caused the bones and ashes of his servants to be everywhere honored, he authorizes the worship paid to them by all manner of prodigies : he would leave the sacred relics of his holy mother in darkness and oblivion, without honor, if that holy body had remained on earth, if he had not speedily removed it to heaven.

"How happy we are," all the fathers exclaim, "to have in heaven such a protectress, who has in her hands all the treasure of the mercies of the Lord!" as is said by Saint Peter Damian.

It may be said, that from the earliest days of the Church, the faithful have considered the mystery of the glorious assumption of the holy Virgin as one of the most solemn and most celebrated of all the festivals. "Behold that venerable day," says Saint Augustine, "that day which surpasses all the solemnities where-with we honor the saints, that day so august and so consoling, that day so fair, on which we believe that the holy Virgin passed from this world to the mansions of eternal glory. Let all the earth resound with praises and shouts of joy! For what an indignity it would be did we not honor, in an extraordinary manner, the solemn feast of her by whom we have received the Author of

life!" "This," says the blessed Peter Damian, "is one of the most celebrated days of the year, because it is the day on which the holy Virgin, worthy by her birth of the royal throne, is raised to the very throne of God, and placed so high that she attracts all eyes, and is the admiration of the angels." By these expressions, he wishes us to understand that the holy Virgin is placed in heaven above all that is not God; and that only God Himself is higher than she. Saint Bernard says, that the assumption of Mary is as ineffable as the generation of Christ. Amazed at the sight of a glory which dazzles even the angels themselves, the holy fathers never speak of it but in the loftiest terms; they admit that the human mind is too limited, and eloquence too weak, to give a just idea of the incomprehensible glory of the triumphant assumption of the holy Virgin.

This is also what the Church wishes to impress on the faithful by celebrating this mystery with an extraordinary solemnity, with a pomp which dates from the fourth century. What do I say? The Church did not wait so long to solemnize it with the most tender devotion, and in sentiments of the most delicious joy. For scarcely had the holy Virgin disappeared from the earth when the day of her glorious assumption into heaven became a solemn day for all the faithful; and as soon as the Church was at liberty to celebrate her feasts publicly, after the festivals established in honor of Jesus Christ, she celebrated none with more magnificence than that of the Assumption of Mary.

In a calendar, entitled, *The Book of the Holy Gospels*, written by the very hand of Saint Agobard, Bishop of Lyons, we find *the Feast of the holy Virgin marked for the 15th of the month of August*, with the Gospel of Saint

Luke, which we still read in the Mass of that day. There is even a more ancient monument concerning the solemnity of that feast, an old calendar, which is seen in the library of the ancient abbey of St. André de Villeneuve les Avignon, in which we read, in the Latin language, "*15th day of August, Assumption of holy Mary.*" This manuscript calendar was that of the Roman Church and of all the holy confessors. Mention is only made in it of Saint Sylvester, Pope, and the learned Benedictine editors assign its date to the year 390, which clearly proves that the Feast of the Assumption was solemnized as soon as peace was given to the Church by the great Constantine, or shortly after that memorable period.

It is further to be remarked, that there is no saint, no martyr, no apostle, whose death and entrance into heaven has been called *assumption*; the happy day on which they entered into the joy of the Lord is called *solemnity, triumph, birth*; it is to the triumph of the holy Virgin alone that the name of *assumption* is given, that is to say, the day on which her blessed soul, taking again its holy body, triumphantly entered the realm of glory, and, soaring above all creatures, took its place immediately below the Creator,—*Angelicam transiens dignitatem usque ad summi regis thronum sublimata est*, says Saint Bernard. Let us, then, spend that holy day in a manner worthy of the festival; let us express to Mary the sentiments of joy that we ought to feel at sight of the sublime glory to which we behold her elevated, and let us approach the holy altars with redoubled fervor and devotion. We can do nothing more agreeable to the holy Virgin than to receive worthily her adorable Son.

EXAMPLE.

Devotion of Kings and Queens of France to Mary.

History testifies that devotion to the Mother of God is, as it were, hereditary on the throne of France. It was by devotion to Mary that Saint Clotilda obtained the conversion of Clovis, the first Most Christian King. It was by devotion to Mary that the virtuous Blanche of Castile obtained the birth of Saint Louis, and Queen Anne of Austria the birth of Louis le Grand. Saint Jeanne consecrated an entire order and her royal person to honor the mystery of the Annunciation. Mary of Poland, grandmother of Louis XVI., employed her beneficent hands in working for the devotion of the altars of Mary, and wished that her heart, after her death, should rest under the auspices of Our Lady of Good Help (*Bons-Secours*), by the side of her august father, Stanislaus, a prince openly devoted to the holy Virgin. The kings were not inferior to the queens in devotion to the Mother of God. Charlemagne made numerous foundations in honor of Mary. His children signalized themselves by the same devotion. Louis the Good always carried about him an image of the holy Virgin, and even in the midst of the diversion of the chase he would go aside to offer her his homage, kneeling before her image. It is well known that there is no practice of devotion to the Mother of God which Saint Louis did not exercise. Francis the First, to atone for an outrage committed on a statue of the Virgin, had another made of silver, and carried it himself to the place of the former one, in a solemn ceremony, in which he was seen to shed tears of devotion. Louis XIII. consecrated his

person and his whole kingdom to the august Mary, and established, in memory of that consecration, and in honor of the Queen of Angels, those solemn processions which are made throughout all France on the day of the Assumption. Louis XIV. confirmed the same practice of devotion by his example, and his august successors did the same; so that all the kings of France honored themselves by being the first servants of the Queen of Heaven. The dauphin, father of Louis XVI., showed the like devotion to the holy Virgin, by making a vow, for the restoration of the dauphiness to health, to go to Notre Dame de Chartres, and faithfully performing that vow, together with his virtuous wife. (*History of France and of the Dauphin.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Stanislaus.)

Saint Stanislaus Kotska daily offered a spiritual crown of flowers to Mary; that is to say, a crown composed of different acts of virtue and of mortification which he practised in her honor. This devotion is likewise practised by the true servants of Mary, who well know that they cannot make her a more acceptable offering than to overcome themselves for love of imitating her virtues.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Bernard.)

O Mary! how great is thy glory! And what shall I say of thee? If I compare thee to heaven, thou art loftier far: if I call thee the mother of nations, thou art above that praise: if I say that thou art the Queen of Angels, all proves that thou meritest that great name.

Deign then, O Mary, O most sublime of all creatures, vouchsafe to give us a portion of thy graces, for on this day thou wert loaded with them ! Attract us by the odor of thy perfumes, making us imitate thy virtues, which alone can gain us admission to the mansions of bliss. Amen.

FOURTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

INSTRUCTION :—THE PORTRAIT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, TRACED BY THE HOLY GHOST IN THE DIVINE SCRIPTURES.

“Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, because the Lord hath been well pleased with thee.”—*Isaiah*, lxii.

God alone, says Saint Andrew of Crete, can make the fitting eulogium and the true portrait of the blessed Virgin ; what, indeed, can human tongue say of *a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and whose brightness dazzles even the inhabitants of the celestial Jerusalem?* As Saint John tells us, in his Apocalypse, the angels themselves wonder at her. From the first moment that she appeared on earth, “Who is this,” they exclaim, “who cometh up from the desert, covered with the sweetest perfumes?” “It is the queen of heaven and earth,” they reply, “with the whole Church;” it is the well-beloved daughter of the Most High; it is that spotless Virgin, blessed amongst all women ; it is that blessed Virgin

who became a mother without ceasing to be a virgin ; it is the ark of the New Covenant, and the morning star, as the Church sings, who announces to us the rising of the divine Sun ; it is the mother of mercy, the refuge of poor sinners, our life, our consolation, our hope ; it is our security with God, says Saint Augustine ; our mediatrix, after the sovereign Mediator, says Saint Bernard ; our advocate, our joy, says Saint Ephrem ; in fine, it is the Mother of God. That single quality, say all the Fathers, includes the most beautiful, the most pompous titles ; for, after God, says the bishop of Hippo, what is there in heaven or on earth greater and more venerable than the Mother of God ? It is that august creature's greatness and her prerogatives that we are about to reproduce in this exercise, such as the Holy Ghost himself has traced them in the divine Scriptures. Doubtless, nothing can be more interesting to the faithful than to hear the praises of her who, next to God himself, is the most venerable object of our respect, of our love, and of our consolation.

It was written from all eternity that the Word should be made man ; and it was in the womb of Mary that that great mystery was to be effected. The selection of the Mother is as ancient in God as the incarnation of the Son. The Church makes her say : " God appointed from all eternity the high rank that I was to hold above all creatures ; and it was thenceforth his will, in elevating me to the Divine Maternity, that I should be inferior only to him. Before any thing was created, my portrait, so to say, was already finished in the thoughts and in the eternal decrees of God ; the world existed not, nor any thing that is in the world, yet I was already the object of the favor and delight of the Most High. Be-

cause I was thenceforward visible to his eyes, with that assemblage of supernatural gifts and virtues, with that plenitude of graces and prerogatives which belong to me. The Lord possessed me from the beginning of his ways."

If, from this general idea which the Holy Ghost gives us of the greatness of Mary, even from eternity, we transport ourselves into time, we shall see her no less privileged before than after the creation of the universe; for scarcely is the world drawn from nothing, when the marvels and the signal prerogatives of this illustrious creature are proclaimed. Scarcely, in fact, had the devil triumphed by the fall of the first man, when Mary enters the lists to repress, to extinguish, the malignant joy of hell for that victory. "Know," says the Lord, speaking to the seducer, "that I will put an irreconcilable enmity between thee and the woman who shall crush thy head, do as thou wilt to escape her. Thou hast found in Eve, mother of the living, yet still a virgin, a credulity, a weakness of which thou hast availed thyself to infect all mankind with sin; thou shalt find in Mary, Mother of the Messiah, ever a virgin, a fruitfulness which shall abundantly repair that loss. In vain will thou vomit against her and against her Son all the rage and venom thou hast at command; with all the efforts of thy malice thou canst not bite her, thou canst only approach her foot, and the Child she shall bring into the world will destroy thine empire from his birth: tyrant as thou shalt have been till then, you shall become a slave; having thy head crushed, thou canst do no evil except to those who voluntarily place themselves in thy chains."

As the Messiah, from the creation of the world, was the great object of the wishes, the promises, and the

prophecies of the Old Testament, it is evident that his blessed Mother must have been at the same time the object of those wishes, those promises, and those predictions. "Be not surprised," says the celebrated Sophronius, "if so many people are eager to publish the greatness of Mary, since God himself pronounced her eulogy at the very beginning of the world!" The Old Testament is full of traits and figures which are, as it were, the first sketches of her true portrait, "for we recognize in the burning bush which Moses saw, the emblem of thine admirable virginity, O Mother of God!" exclaims the Church. The miraculous rod of Aaron, which alone budded in the Tabernacle, and which was afterwards preserved with so much care in the Ark of the Covenant, is a no less striking symbol of that fruitful virginity. Gideon's fleece, covered with the dew of heaven, whilst all the earth around remains dry, is one of the most admirable figures of the Mother of God, says Saint Ambrose; and it is that which causes the Church to say, that "when the divine Word became flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, it was as a miraculous rain descending upon the fleece." "Who does not perceive," says the blessed Peter Damian, "that the Ark of the Covenant, made of incorruptible wood, and which inspired priests, peoples, and kings with so much respect, was a very sensible figure of the Mother of God, who is justly called the Ark of the New Covenant;" and it is in the same sense that the prophet exclaims: "Arise, O Lord! and enter into the dwelling of thy glory, thou and the ark in which thou hast commenced the New Covenant, the great work of our salvation." "The throne of Solomon, of pure gold and shining ivory," says the same father, "is no less a figure of her." It is in the

womb of the holy Virgin, more precious than the purest gold, more polished than ivory, that the true Solomon appeared upon the throne, when the divine Word was made flesh.

There are few figures in the Old Testament which are not allegorical paintings of the holy Virgin. Hence it is that she is called the tree of life that bore the true fruit of salvation, the fountain of pure water born from the earth to water all its surface, the rainbow, the sure sign of our peace and reconciliation with God, the mysterious ladder which Jacob saw in his sleep, and by which heaven is reached. She is also called the tabernacle, the house, the temple of God; the candlestick of massive gold adorned with seven branches which shed a dazzling light; the sacred altar on which Jesus Christ, the innocent victim, offered himself to his eternal Father for the salvation of all men; the bright unfading rose; the tower of David, on whose walls hang a thousand bucklers, and all the arms of the valiant; finally, the gate of heaven, as it is by her that He came who alone could open it to us. Such are the figures, with an infinity of others, under which the Holy Ghost gives us the portrait of Mary in the divine Scriptures.

But the glory and the prerogatives of Mary are especially manifested by the striking connection which they have with the illustrious women of the old Law; for, even as all the holy personages and great men who appeared before the coming of Jesus Christ had some of his traits; so there is not a woman in Scripture, celebrated for her rare virtues and splendid achievements, say the Fathers of the Church, who is not the figure of the holy Virgin. Eve, created in the state of innocence, is, according to them, the symbol of Mary conceived

without sin. Aza, which signifies beautiful and richly adorned, and whose husband was Othoniel, a name which means God of my God, is a very expressive emblem of Mary. Esther, by a singular privilege, is excepted from the general law which condemns all others to death, a marked symbol of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Esther delivers her people from a universal massacre, and Mary brings into the world the Redeemer to save all men. Judith delivered the nation from the dread Holofernes, who had sworn to exterminate the Jewish people, and to whom more justly than to Mary can be applied what the High Priest Joachim said to that heroine of Bethulia: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people; God made use of thee to deliver us from our most deadly enemy; because thou hast loved chastity more than any one, so shalt thou be eternally blessed." "Thou art blessed by the Most High above all women," said Ozias, chief of the people of Israel. Who does not see in all these traits the sketch, so to say, of Mary's picture, six or seven hundred years before she came into the world?

Let us finish the portrait of this divine Virgin, by saying that all the prophets who have spoken of the Son have likewise made mention of the Mother: "There is no interpreter of the Holy Ghost who has not spoken of thee, O Mary," exclaims St. Andrew of Crete; "thou art the ordinary subject of their oracles, and the object of the allegorical portraits which they have left us." "As it was necessary to prepare for the ineffable mystery of the incarnation of the divine Word by prophecies, say Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Gregory of Nyssa, so it was also necessary to prepare the human mind by

prophecies, to believe in a mother, ever a virgin, and a pure creature truly Mother of God."

EXAMPLE.

A drowned Person restored to Life because of his Love for the Praises and the Greatness of Mary.

A Canon, whilst reciting the praises of the Mother of God, fell into a river. As he was not then in a state of grace, he would have been inevitably lost for all eternity, if Mary had not come to his assistance; but that kind and tender mother, who never abandons any of her servants, restored him to life on account of the love he had for celebrating her praise, and she afterwards said to him: "Amend your life, and henceforward honor my Immaculate Conception." On the instant, the Canon, brought back to life, was miraculously taken out of the water: his first act was to thank his generous deliverer, and he immediately became a monk of the Cistercian order. Never did he cease to cherish the most tender devotion to Mary, and he propagated everywhere that of her Immaculate Conception. (*Glories of Mary.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the son of St. Bridget.)

Rejoice, in the depth of your heart, for the perfections of Mary; such was the practice of the son of St. Bridget, who was accustomed to say, that nothing in the world gave him so much joy as to know how much Mary was beloved by God, and that there was no torment to which he would not willingly expose himself, to prevent that great Queen of Heaven from losing any degree of her greatness.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Athanasius.)

O most holy Virgin, hear our prayers ; bestow upon us the gifts of thy riches, and give part in the abundance of the graces with which thou art filled ! The Archangel salutes thee, and calls thee *full of grace* ; all nations call thee blessed ; all the celestial hierarchies bless thee, and we who are exiles in this earthly sphere, we also say to thee, "Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with thee ;" pray for us, O Mother of God ! our powerful Queen and our august Sovereign. Amen.

FIFTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

INSTRUCTION: DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS A SIGN OF PREDESTINATION.

"And it will be a sign to you that the Angel of Death shall not smite you."—*Exod.* chap. xii.

DEVOTION to the holy Virgin was born with the Church itself. No sooner was the Son known, than the Mother was loved. For her the faithful always have had a religious worship, an ardent zeal, a tender affection. She has possessed, in all times, the hearts of the truly faithful ; and devotion to the Blessed Virgin has, in all ages of the Church, formed a part of the character of the elect. Hence the zeal of all the Fathers and of all

the saints to publish the greatness, the prerogatives, the power, and the praises of Mary.

"To have a singular devotion towards thee, O Blessed Virgin!" exclaims Saint John Damascene, "is to have defensive arms, which God places only in the hands of those whom it is his will to save!" "Groaning still, in the place of our exile," says Saint Bernard, "we have, so to say, sent before us, from earth to heaven, an advocate who will work efficaciously in the affair of our salvation: it is the Mother of our Judge, it is the Mother of Mercy. Holy Virgin," adds the same Father, "I consent that thy mercy and goodness to us shall never be published, if any can be found to say that thou hast failed them in their need, when they have invoked thee with fervor and with confidence."

A tender devotion towards the holy Virgin is, according to the opinion of all the Fathers of the Church, one of the most evident and least equivocal marks that we can have on earth of our predestination; which caused Saint Anselm to say those beautiful words: "As it is of necessity, O Virgin a thousand times blessed, that he who has only aversion for thee, and for whom thou hast only contempt, should perish miserably, so it is impossible that he should not be saved whom thou honorest with thy favor, and who, after God, places all his trust in thee!" It is still in the same sense, and in the same spirit, that Saint Augustine addresses her in these words: "Thou art the only hope of sinners, O holy Virgin! It is through thine intercession that we expect the pardon of our sins, and the eternal reward."

Finally, it is in the same sense that Saint Bonaventure says: "Whosoever will worthily honor and serve the holy Virgin, shall be saved; but he who neglects her

worship and her service, shall infallibly die in his sins." "My dear children," says Saint Bernard, "behold the ladder of sinners; behold my greatest confidence. All my hope rests on the powerful protection of Mary, the treasury, one may say, of the graces which Jesus Christ has merited for us. In whose favor will she distribute them? Upon whom will she pour forth her treasures of benediction, if it be not on those who honor her with a truly religious worship, who tenderly love her, who imitate her virtues, and serve her with zeal and with fervor?"

It would be an endless task to relate all that the holy Fathers and doctors of the Church, and the Church herself, say in relation to the moral certainty there is that the clients of Mary, if they live according to the sentiments inspired by that devotion, shall be saved; and shall obtain all sorts of graces and benedictions in the diverse situations in which divine Providence may place them.

Let us, then, reanimate our confidence and our love towards that Mother of goodness and mercy; let us cherish for her the tenderest and the most affectionate sentiments; being mindful that "if Mary," as says Saint Proclus, "is the glory of virgins, the joy of mothers, the support of the faithful, the crown of the Church, the true model of faith, the seal of piety, the rule of truth, the ornament of virtue, and the sanctuary of all grace, we ought to prove by our conduct that we are her true servants; and that, by our belief and by our morals, we hope, after having served her upon earth, to arrive at the happiness of seeing her, blessing her, and eternally praising her in heaven."

EXAMPLE.

Edifying History of the Miraculous Foundation of the Church of Saint Mary Major, at Rome.—Zeal and piety for the devotion to Mary magnificently rewarded.

About the middle of the fourth century, during the pontificate of Pope Liberius, and the reign of the Emperor Constantius, the patrician John, of one of the oldest and first families in Rome, still more illustrious by his piety than by his birth, desired to give some public marks of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was singularly devoted. As he had no children, he resolved, with the consent of his wife, who was not at all inferior to him in either nobleness or virtue, to bequeath all his wealth to her to whom, after God, he owed every thing. Their resolution being taken, by special prayers and alms, they sought to obtain from the holy Virgin the grace to learn how she wished them to employ the wealth they had consecrated to her. That Mother of Mercy heard the prayers of her pious servants, and on the night of the 5th day of the month of August she appeared to both separately in a dream, declared to them how their devotion had pleased her, how acceptable to her their resolution was, and told them that it was her Son's will and hers that they should employ their wealth in building a church in her honor on Mount Esquiline; and that they would there find both the site and the plan of the church marked out on a space which should be miraculously covered with snow.

They doubted not that this vision, common to both, was supernatural, and they waited on the Pope, who had had, on the same night, a similar dream, and who,

seeing that Heaven spoke, determined to verify the fact himself. Accordingly, the clergy, the people, the patrician John and his wife, went in procession to the scene of the prodigy. Being arrived on Mount Esquiline, they found the place covered with snow, although it was in the time of the greatest heat. A prodigy so visible amazed all present, who, with one voice, proclaimed it a miracle ; to admiration succeeded the most lively sentiments of gratitude, of respect, of devotion. The church was speedily erected, according to the plan miraculously marked out by the snow, and was built at the sole expense of the patrician.

This miracle was too evident not to excite the devotion of the public ; every one regarded that church as a place blessed and singularly privileged, by the choice which the holy Virgin made of it. Although there were already in Rome, as everywhere else, oratories consecrated to God and dedicated to the holy Virgin, this was, properly speaking, the first church in Rome, specially dedicated under the title of the Mother of God, which dedication is celebrated on the 5th of the month of August, the day of the Feast of Our Lady of the Snows ; and the church, whose construction gave birth to that festival, is that known in Rome by the name of Saint Mary Major.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Francis de Sales.)

Have recourse continually to Mary, and especially in all your wants. Saint Francis de Sales strongly advises that practice, and acknowledges having derived great fruits therefrom.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Ephrem.)

O holy Mother of God, protect us, preserve us under the wings of thy mercy: all our trust is in thee. From our most tender infancy we consecrated ourselves to thee as our Sovereign; thou art the port in which we find shelter. O spotless Virgin! we are devoted to thee, and we are under thy protection forever. Amen.

SIXTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR PASSION-SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION ON THE ARDENT ZEAL OF THE CHURCH FOR
THE HONOR AND GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house, and the place where thy glory dwelleth."—*Ps. xxv.*

NOTHING is more solidly established than the proofs of the ardent zeal in all times displayed by the Church for the honor and glory of the Blessed Virgin. In order to convince ourselves of this, let us set out from the authentic testimony of that same Church; let us go back on the vestiges of the most ancient tradition to the first ages of Christianity, let us collect all the suffrages of the Greek and Latin Fathers, let us consult all the liturgies, let us follow the lights furnished by the history of all times—what a prodigious number shall we not find of temples and altars built and raised in honor of Mary?

What town, what hamlet is there in which we find not some image, some miraculous statue of the Mother of God, or in which there is not some church, some chapel, some oratory consecrated to her worship, and frequented by a concourse of true believers? Who can be ignorant of that ardent and universal zeal, exhibited in defence of Mary's interests, in every century that saw her attacked? Let us only recall to mind the glorious triumph of the Mother of God in one of the most numerous, the most holy of the general councils, that of Ephesus! The fact is too glorious to the Blessed Virgin, and too remarkable in itself, to be omitted in a work exclusively intended to spread abroad the true worship so legitimately due to that divine Mother.

Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, that vain man who, under a mask of modesty and piety, concealed the blackest and most malignant soul, allowing himself to be carried away by the spirit of pride, and abusing the power given him by his character and dignity, dared to dispute Mary's august quality of Mother of God. With that intent, there were no artifices that he did not employ, no disguise that he did not make use of, to cover his error, or to conceal the malignity of his heresy; for, according to the account of the Fathers, all the rich and honorable titles that can otherwise be imagined he was willing to bestow on Mary, excepting that of *Mother of God*, which was alone in question. He confessed that she was the Mother of the Holy of Holies, that she was the Mother of the Redeemer of men; he admitted that she had borne the Word of God in her chaste womb; but he would not confess that the holy Virgin was absolutely and without restriction *Mother of God*—the quality which is the beginning and the foundation of all the others.

The Church, who saw that to refuse to Mary that august title of *Mother of God*, was to destroy the mystery of the Incarnation, took up the defence of that essential point with all the strength and ardor of her zeal ; and the more Nestorius persisted in combating against that title of *Mother of God*, the more earnestly she strove to defend and maintain it. Alarmed by this horrible impiety, Pope Saint Celestine, who then governed the Church with great wisdom, convened, in the year 431, the famous œcumenical Council of Ephesus, in a temple of that city, dedicated to the blessed Virgin, and where the Bishops from all parts of Christendom assembled in great numbers. It was at the opening of this august assembly that Saint Cyril, patriarch of Jerusalem, who presided, in the name of the sovereign Pontiff, pronounced that eloquent discourse which was the admiration of all the Fathers, which ever forms the consolation of the truly faithful, and was judged worthy of being inserted amongst the acts of that celebrated Council. Nothing more beautiful is to be found in the writings of the Fathers of the following ages, and I cannot resist the temptation of giving the exordium here :

“With pleasure I see saints who, invited by the glorious Mary, Mother of God and ever virgin, have come hither from all parts. Joy and consolation have succeeded to grief and sadness in my heart, at the sight of so many great personages ; for to-day there shall be accomplished in us that oracle of King David : ‘What is sweeter than for brethren to dwell together in unity?’ We bless thee, then, altogether, holy and mysterious Trinity, who hast brought us together in this temple of the *Mother of God* ! Mary, Mother of God, we bless thee, venerable treasure of the whole universe, torch

whose light is never extinguished; crown of Virginity; sceptre of good doctrine; indestructible temple; abode of Him whom no dwelling can contain; Mother and Virgin by whom is named *blessed*, in the holy Gospels, he who cometh in the name of the Saviour;—we bless thee, thou who, in thy womb, ever pure and ever virginal, didst contain the Immense and the Incomprehensible; thou by whom the Holy Trinity is adored and glorified; by whom the precious Cross of the Saviour is exalted and revered; by whom heaven triumphs—the angels rejoice—the devils are expelled—the tempter is vanquished—frail nature raised to heaven—the rational creature, who had adored idols, brought to the knowledge of the truth; thou, by whom the faithful obtain holy baptism, and are anointed with the oil of gladness; thou, by whom all the churches of the world have been founded, and all the nations brought to penance. What shall I say more? Thou by whom the celestial light, the only Son of God, enlightens those who, being in darkness, are seated in the shadows of death; by whom the prophets foretold the future—the Apostles announced salvation to the nations; thou by whom kings reign. What man can worthily praise the most praiseworthy Virgin Mary?"

When Saint Cyril spoke thus of the Blessed Virgin before that universal council, composed of more than 360 Bishops, he spoke nothing that was new or unknown to those illustrious Fathers, or that could excite their suspicion. He spoke according to the tradition of his church, and of all the churches of the Fathers who heard him; hence it may be said, that the praises he gave to the Blessed Virgin were the language of the Church of that age, and of the preceding ages; consequently, tradition was the rule of Saint Cyril's discourse.

The heresiarch Nestorius was condemned, excommunicated, degraded, in that assembly, which anathematized all his errors, and then declared, as one of the principal articles of faith, as an essential point of the Christian religion, that Mary was, in the most natural sense, truly the Mother of God ; not that that belief was new, since, according to St. Cyril, it was authorized by all tradition, and Julian the Apostate had long before made it a reproach to the Christians. But they desired that that belief, as ancient as the Church, should thenceforth be as a symbol of faith ; and it was determined in the Council of Ephesus, that the title of *Mother of God* should be a term consecrated against the heresy of Nestorius, as that of *consubstantial* had been in the Council of Nice against that of Arius.

It cannot be imagined with what joy, with what applause, was received that judgment of the universal Church, so glorious to the Blessed Virgin.

The day on which the decision was to be given upon the Divine Maternity of Mary having arrived, the people crowded into the streets, filled the public squares, and gathered around the temple where the Fathers of the council were assembled ; and, at the moment when the decision was announced, when it became known that Mary was maintained in just possession of the title of Mother of God, the whole city resounded with shouts of gladness. These transports of joy were so lively and so universal, that the Fathers, on leaving the council, were loaded with benedictions, and conducted in triumph to their respective lodgings. Perfumes were sprinkled in the streets through which they were to pass, they were lighted on their way by a thousand fires ; nothing was wanting to the pomp of that general rejoicing, nor

to the splendor and magnificence of the glorious victory which Mary had gained over her enemies.

Nestorius, driven forth into banishment, wandered from one place of exile to another. Despised by all, and a horror to himself, he was at length banished to Panopolis, in the Thebaïd, whence the governor again had him removed to another place in the same territory. He died in 436, overwhelmed with misery and infirmity, after having his tongue gnawed by worms,—terrible but just punishment of his impieties against Mary. (*Eccles. Hist.*)

EXAMPLE.

Advantages for the Faithful of the establishment of Festivals in honor of Mary.

Feasts in the Church are pious rejoicings, solemnities made in honor of God and of his saints, not only to celebrate their virtues and to honor their merits by a religious worship, but also to recognize the singular graces which they have received, to excite our piety towards them, to conquer, by their example, our own pusillanimity, to solicit their intercession with God, and to nourish our own confidence.

The Church has too deeply at heart the worship of the Mother of God, she is too much persuaded of the all-powerful influence she has in heaven, and of the need which the faithful have of her protection, to be wanting in zeal in rendering her the homage which is her due, or in gratitude in not perpetuating her benefits and the visible marks of her goodness and beneficence. Hence, that attention to seize every opportunity to inspire, to preserve, and even to increase her worship throughout the whole Christian world; hence that law which she has made for herself, to begin and end the divine office

and all the hours by a special prayer to the *Mother of God*; hence that eagerness to inspire genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin in all her true children; hence, in fine, that multiplicity of feasts established in her honor, and the great number of pious societies under the name and protection of Mary; and if heretics were never seen who were not enemies of the devotion and worship due to the Mother of God, so neither have any of the truly faithful ever been seen who did not cherish a filial love, a special veneration, a singular tenderness for the Blessed Virgin. The Church, animated by that spirit, and filled with that tenderness, desires nothing more earnestly than to impart them to her children. Hence it is that, besides all the mysteries of the Blessed Virgin which she celebrates with so much solemnity, like the Feasts of her *Immaculate Conception*, of her *Nativity*, of her *Presentation*, of her *Annunciation*, her *Visitation*, her *glorious and triumphant Assumption* into heaven, body and soul, that common Mother of the faithful, always guided by the Holy Ghost, has established many other particular festivals in honor of Mary, on occasion of some new benefit received by her intercession, or some new mark of her tenderness for the faithful. Of this number are the feasts of Our Lady of the Snows, called Our Lady of the Angels, that of the Rosary, that of the Scapular, of Mercy, of the Holy Name of Mary. We have spoken of all these festivals; their establishment by the Church cannot fail to contribute to the sanctification of the faithful, and their celebration to obtain great graces. Mary sees with pleasure that her servants perpetuate the memory of the benefits that she has bestowed upon them, on the days which they solemnize in her honor, by pious works. (*Croiset.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Vincent Ferrier.)

Be careful to sanctify the festivals of the Blessed Virgin, by approaching the Sacraments, and proposing to yourselves as a model some virtue of Mary, adapted to the mystery of the feast: for instance, for the Conception, purity of intention; for the Nativity, the renewal of the spirit, by banishing tepidity; for the Presentation, detachment from the thing to which you believe yourself most attached; for the Annunciation, humility, the love of contempt; for the Visitation, charity towards your neighbor; for the Purification, obedience to your superiors; finally, for the Assumption, detachment from earthly things and preparation for death.

Such has always been the practice of the true lovers of Mary, and especially of Saint Vincent Ferrier.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernardine of Sienna.)

O woman, loaded with benedictions above all creatures! thou art the only Mother of God, the mistress of the world, the queen of the universe, the dispenser of all graces, the ornament of the Church; in thee is contained the incomprehensible greatness of all virtues, of all gifts; thou art the temple of God, the paradise of delight, the model of all the just, the consolation of thy servants, the glory and the source of our salvation; thou art the gate of heaven, the joy of the elect, the object of God's predilection. It is only imperfectly we can celebrate thy praises, but do thou make up for our deficiencies, to the end that we may worthily praise thee throughout eternity. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR PALM-SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE UNANIMITY OF THE RESPECTFUL SENTIMENTS OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH, AND OF THE SAINTS, FOR THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“They all with one voice blessed her, and said : Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honor of our people.”—*Judith*, chap. xiii.

It would seem that I might dispense with making a particular exercise on the unanimity of the Fathers of the Church, as regards their tender devotion towards Mary, after having produced so many prayers taken from their works, and placed at the end of each exercise; but it might be said that those prayers were composed in moments of fervor, or on special occasions. So, for the edification and instruction of the faithful, and to add still more to their confidence in that good Mother, I will here bring together some fragments of their principal discourses, which prove at once their admiration of Mary, and their hope in her infinite merits. I must premise that the apostles themselves regarded Mary, the Mother of God, as their oracle and their consolation under all circumstances : it was by her inspirations that they composed the Creed which bears their name, according to the most remote tradition. I open, then, this sacred library, this centre of light darting from every side, where those venerable men, whom I willingly call the organs of the Holy Ghost and the firmest supporters of the Church, never appear more eloquent than when they speak of the Blessed Virgin.

Saint Irenæus, one of the strongest pillars of the primitive Church, exclaims: "Mary has been the advocate of Eve, in order that as men were made captives of death by one virgin, they should be freed by another virgin; and that the obedient virgin became the advocate of the disobedient virgin." "'Hail, full of grace!' This mode of salutation is found nowhere in Scripture," says Origen; "it was reserved for Mary, and for Mary only." Tertullian, that great defender of the faith, says, in speaking of Mary, Mother of God: "The word of death had glided into Eve; the Word, the source of life, was to enter into Mary, in order that that which was lost by one woman should be recalled to salvation by another woman." Gregory of Cæsarea, in his third homily, urges us to take shelter beneath the wings of Mary's mercy, and to put our whole confidence in her. Saint Ephrem, in his sermon on the praises of Mary, tells us: "Mary has given life to the world, in such wise that she is at once the Mother of life and of all who live."

Let us hear Saint Ambrose, in his second book on the Virgin: "The life of Mary," he says, "is the only rule for all Christians." In the authors we shall find a perfect model, which leaves us ignorant of nothing in us that needs reforming of what we have to do, of what we have to avoid. The immortal Saint Augustine shows all his veneration for the Blessed Virgin when he says, in his book on "Nature and Grace," that "he always excepts Mary when there is question of sin; and that he does not consider that she should be in question, on account of the honor and respect which are due to God." And in his book, entitled "The Holy Virgin," he adds, that "Mary is the Mother of all the members of Jesus

Christ, because by her charity she has co-operated in giving faithful children to the Church."

Saint Chrysostom, whose eloquence equals the tenderness of his sentiments for the Blessed Virgin, assures us, in his 64th sermon, that "God bestows part of his graces on the other saints, but he has given the plenitude of them to Mary." I pass silently over many other passages which I might advantageously produce, but I cannot resist the force of the expressions used by Saint Germain, patriarch of Constantinople, when he exclaims, in his "Discourse on the Holy Virgin:" "Thou alone art exalted above this universe; we bless thee, O divine Mother!" And elsewhere he says: "No one has been saved but by thy assistance, O Mother of God! no one has obtained mercy, but through thy mediation." Saint John Damascene, treating the subject of the Incarnation of the Word, says: "Mary is a heaven, more divine than heaven itself;" and in the same discourse, he adds: "All creatures were groaning in darkness. At length Mary came into the world, and appearing through those darksome clouds, she presents herself in the ravishing splendor of her beauty, and attracts to herself the looks of the Divinity." Saint Peter Damian says, on the same subject: "The name of Mary is drawn from the bosom of the Divinity; for it is by her, and in her, and with her, that the great work of our salvation is finally resolved upon. And as without the Word nothing had been created, so without Mary nothing had been repaired. Let us rejoice, then," he continues, in his sermon on the birth of Mary, "let us rejoice in this great day of the Nativity of the most holy Virgin, which announces a new joy to the world, and gives the happy first-fruits of our salvation. Let us rejoice; and as we show forth our

joy for the birth of Jesus Christ, let us also manifest it for the birth of his Mother. On this day appeared the Queen of the world, the gate of heaven, the sanctuary of God, the star of the sea, the mysterious ladder by which the Most High descends on earth and man ascends to heaven, of which Mary is the delight, becoming at the same time the terror of the devils in hell."

The same saint appears transported into heaven, when, speaking of the Assumption of Mary, he exclaims, "This is the great day on which the sun seems to shine with new splendor ; happy day, on which Mary, raised to the throne of God the Father, and placed beside the Trinity, invites the angels to the grandest and most beautiful spectacle ! The whole celestial court receives her, and hastens to see her seated on the right hand of God, clothed in a garment shining with gold, and surrounded by all her celestial virtues." Saint Anselm, in his eighteenth chapter on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, expresses himself with no less energy, when he addresses to her this touching exclamation : "Words fail me, O Queen of Heaven, because my mind is not sufficient for my gratitude. I am troubled in the depth of my soul by the eagerness I feel to return thee thanks for such great benefits ! But I can conceive no thanks equal to thy bounties, and I am ashamed to offer those which do not worthily correspond to them."

Who does not know the tender, the affectionate, the quite filial devotion of the great St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin, whose most zealous and devoted servant he was ? All his works, voluminous as they are, are full of the praises of that good Mother : he has treated of every subject that can glorify her, and has spoken of all her prerogatives ;—of her greatness ; her virtues ; her

goodness; her power; her mercy; her glory; her love for men; her tenderness for sinners; the need we have of her intercession; the pleasure that God finds in hearing her. It is with that ardent zeal, of which all his works bear the impress, that I shall quote a few passages from that great saint, all fire in whatever concerns Mary. "Celebrate her," he exclaims, in his second Homily on the words *Missus est*, "celebrate Mary; say that she is respected by the angels—that she was announced by patriarchs and prophets; glorify her clemency, honor her as the source of grace, the mediation of salvation, the reparation of ages! Behold what the Church announces to me of her, and what she teaches me to announce to others. For myself, what I have learned from that holy Church I preserve with care, and publish with certitude." And in the seventeenth letter, he adds: "Mary entered into the deep abyss of divine wisdom beyond all that can be believed, in such wise that she was, as it were, plunged in that inaccessible light, as far as the condition of a creature can permit."

I will conclude this article with two passages taken from Saint Thomas and the celebrated Gerson, both so tenderly devoted to Mary. The former, in his exposition of the *Angelical Salutation*, says: "The Lord is with thee, but He is with thee in a manner very different from that in which he is with the angel: he is with Mary in the quality of Son; he is with the angel in the quality of Lord and Master: hence it is that Mary is called the temple of God and the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost." Gerson, in his sermon *On the Nativity of the Holy Virgin*, tells us: "Mary is blessed above all creatures of her sex, because she is the only one who has removed the malediction; who has drawn down blessings and opened

the gates of heaven. Justly does she bear the name of Mary, which signifies *Star of the Sea*; for even as the star guides the mariner into port, so does Mary guide the soul to glory. All the virtues concurred in forming her: we give her the innocence of Abel; the faith of Abraham; the constancy of Joshua; the wisdom of Solomon: she is beautiful as Rachel; fruitful as Leah; wise as Rebecca; noble as David: she surpasses Moses in meekness; Job in patience; Isaac in obedience; Jeremiah in grief; the mother of the Machabees in courage; Jahel in prudence: she unites in herself alone all the qualities, all the merits of the illustrious men of holy antiquity." Finally, he concludes by saying the eulogy of Mary is the eulogy of her own Son: "*Laus Mariæ, laus Filii.*"

EXAMPLE.

Victory gained by recourse to Mary.

John Comnenus, emperor of the East, gave a very striking proof of the devotion he had to images of the Mother of God. The Scythians had made an irruption into Thrace; they had precipitated themselves on that country with much violence; finally, by a usurpation worthy of their bad faith, they had made themselves masters of it. The emperor, in that province of his empire had recourse to the Queen of Heaven, and by the visible protection which his army received from her, he expelled the barbarians, and totally routed them. Then, far from being ungrateful to his protectress, he would openly attribute to her all the honor of the victory. He placed her picture upon a triumphal car magnificently drawn by four white horses, mounted by the first princes of his empire; and he himself, walking in front of the

triumphal car, bareheaded, with a cross in his hand, referred to Mary all the glory. Let us honor the images of the Queen of Heaven as those great personages did, and by every means in our power.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Anthony of Padua.)

Daily return thanks to the Blessed Virgin for all the benefits that we have received from her and by her. What ingratitude to pass a single day without remembering that amiable benefactress! Let us, then, be grateful; let us pray her to forgive our past negligence, and beg of her the grace to correspond more faithfully to her goodness.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernardine of Sienna.)

Most worthy Virgin, thou art the Mother of Mercy, the treasure of grace, the source of piety, and the true living temple of God. O Mary, we have recourse to thee, canst thou reject us—thou who hast never failed in their need any one who invoked thee in all sincerity of heart? Amen.

EIGHTEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR EASTER-SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION: CONTEMPT OR INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORSHIP OF AND DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS A PRINCIPAL TRAIT OF HERETICS, AND THE MARK OF BAD CHRISTIANS.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and she shall crush thy head.”—*Gen.*, chap. iii.

HAVING seen in the two preceding exercises the unanimous and universal concurrence amongst the saints of all ages, in loving, praising, and honoring the Blessed Virgin—that zeal so ardent, so eager, so constant, of the whole Church from its very birth, to inspire all the faithful with love and respect for the Mother of God, and the most tender confidence—it will doubtless be asked, how it is that there have always been heretics enemies of Mary, when it is by Mary that God gave himself to men, and dispenses to them the treasures of his graces and his favors. Whence comes that rage, that fury against the tenderest and most perfect of creatures, against the most powerful protectress, against the most faithful advocate, against the most pure virgin, against the most generous sovereign, against the most compassionate Mother? In what point of view, and on what side can we consider her, to discover the slightest cause for dislike, or even coldness? Yet, going back to the very first heresy, and from the birth of that infernal hydra down to these latter times, what a host of enemies of the Blessed Virgin shall we not find! Some have denied that she was Mother of God; and others, that she

was always a virgin. These have attacked her worship; those have destroyed her images. Others have exclaimed against the practices established by the faithful, and approved by the universal Church. Finally, there are some who have not been ashamed to compose infamous writings against her. Hell itself is horrified, so to say, by the horrible blasphemies which a Luther, a Calvin, have belched forth against the august and holy Mother of God. With what impiety has she not been treated by all the other sectarians and the wicked Catholics of all times ! Some have condemned the magnificent eulogies that all the Fathers have bestowed upon her; and others, that multitude of temples raised in her honor, as well as the number of her festivals meant to nourish the piety of her children, and maintain the devotion due to her.

“Of all the festivals kept in honor of Mary,” said the impious Luther, “there is none of which I have such a horror as that of the Immaculate Conception.” With what fury have they not assailed the most pious societies founded under her auspices ! There is no devotion to the Mother of God which has not been treated as a superstition—Rosary, Scapular, Litanies, offices, beads, congregations, cords, vows, pilgrimages, consecration, nothing has been spared; and this impiety has descended even to our own age. Whence comes this spleen, heresy, and impiety against the Blessed Virgin? “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” Behold the cause of this fierce opposition from all the enemies of Mary! “I will put irreconcilable enmity between thee and the woman, and she shall crush thy head,” said God to the serpent, after the fall of the first man; and there is the source of that implacable hatred of heresy for the Mother of God. She crushed the head of the ancient

serpent, not only because she was exempted from original sin, that fatal source of all others, but principally because she conceived in her womb and brought forth the Redeemer of the world, who disarmed all hell, and ruined its empire. She has crushed that head; and is it to be wondered at, that it is against her the devil and all his serpents vomit their venom, and express their hate? And so they will continue to act towards her; and they will make every effort to cry down and prevent the worship so legitimately due to Mary. They will not cease to do all that in their power lies (I speak still of the devil, heretics, the impious, and the licentious) to obscure the splendor of her glory, to deprive her of the illustrious prerogatives of her rank, to dispute with her the fairest privileges she has received from God. They will do all they can to close that consoling asylum to unhappy sinners, who have recourse to that good and tender Mother, with as much confidence as consolation. Finally, they will never neglect any thing to weaken, and even, if it were possible, to stifle in the heart of all faithful Christians, the best founded title of their only hope amid the miseries which encompass them in this valley of tears!

But the efforts of hell shall always be unavailing: what though the infernal serpent has in all ages produced new reptiles; they crawl upon the earth, and can only, at the most, make vain attempts to bite her heel. That is the utmost that can be done by the malignant efforts of heresy, and its indefatigable emissaries. Mary will ever, and in all times, annihilate the works of the children of the devil, since she has crushed the head of that father of lies. There is no enemy of Jesus Christ who has not declared against his holy and divine Mother; but, vain

attacks ! useless efforts ! can man, who is but weakness, ever battle against the house of the living God, founded on the solid rock ? No. All these attacks, all these efforts, will serve but to enhance the splendor of Mary's triumphs and the greatness of her victories. Is it surprising that the adversaries of the Son should become the adversaries of the Mother ? *Qui me odit, matrem meam odit*, might be said ; but thou, O holy Mother ! thou art and hast been the shoal whereon all errors and all heresies have failed, and so shalt thou ever be ! Thou alone hast triumphed over all heresies ! Scarcely is there one of them formed in Christendom which has not attacked thee, and not one there is which thou hast not confounded. "Thou alone hast defeated all heresies throughout the world," says the whole Church, with Saint Augustine ; "the victory which thou hast obtained and shall yet obtain over all thine enemies, and over the rash censors of thy worship, will complete thy triumph." The infernal enterprises which have been undertaken against the Mother of God, the sophisms and the artifices of error, of impiety, and of licentiousness, to abolish her worship, have all been vain and futile ; the worship of Mary subsists, and will always subsist ; and devotion to that good and tender Mother has become, and will daily become, more fervent and more universal. Woe to us, if we do not feel the sentiments thereof ! woe to us, if we break loose from that anchor of salvation ! Woe, indeed, to us, if that ladder of sinners, as Saint Bernard calls her, should chance to fail us : our ruin is then certain. But far from us be such fears, far from our hearts the slightest weakening of our loving trust in that incomparable Virgin. We are her servants, we are her children ; and it is written that the

gates of hell, raised up by her enemies, shall no more prevail against her than against the zeal of true Christians ; and such we shall be if we are truly devout to Mary.

EXAMPLE.

Model of Devotion to Mary proposed to the Pastors of Souls.

Saint Charles Borromeo had the most lively and tender devotion for the holy Virgin. Besides daily reciting, on his knees, the beads and the Office of that glorious Virgin, he also fasted on bread and water on the eves of our Lady's festivals. Never was any one more exact than he in saluting her when the bell gave notice to say the Angelus. It is in virtue of a decree of Louis XI., in the year 1472, that the *Angelus* is rung at noon. He would even have in his cathedral a chapel and confraternity of the Rosary. On the first Sunday in every month he caused a solemn procession to be made, in which was carried, with great pomp, a picture of the Blessed Virgin. He placed under her protection all his foundations ; he ordered that, throughout his whole diocese, the name of Mary, as often as it was heard pronounced, should be honored with much respect ; he caused to be placed over the portal of every parish church within his jurisdiction, a picture of the Mother of God, in order to impress upon the people that we cannot enter the temple of eternal glory without the favor of her whom the Church has called the gate of heaven. (*Lives of the Saints.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint John Damascene.)

Have the greatest respect for the pictures and statues of the Blessed Virgin, following the example of so many

saints who have honored them in a particular manner, especially Saint John Damascene.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Irenæus.)

Thy glory, holy Virgin, is beyond all praise. Heaven and earth pay thee the worship and the homage of veneration which is due to thee. With more reason ought we ourselves to honor, bless, and glorify thee. Amen.

NINETEENTH EXERCISE.

FOR EASTER-MONDAY.

INSTRUCTION : THE ONE TITLE OF MOTHER OF GOD IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE GREATNESS AND THE PREROGATIVES OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."—*St. Matt.*, chap. i.

SOME zealous servants of Mary wonder that the sacred text of the New Testament teaches so little of the greatness of the Blessed Virgin ; they would have the Gospel enlarge more on the praises of the Mother of God : but, replies a learned interpreter, we have whereon to found the highest estimation that man can have of a pure creature, in the words of the Gospel—*Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.* Mark ! *of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.* The Holy Ghost, who

was not ignorant of the foundation on which he was to establish the greatness of his spouse, considered that the single title of *Mother of God*, properly understood, would supply the place of all eulogies; and that making known the divinity of the Son by a long series of incontestable miracles, the greatest honors could not be denied to her who was recognized as the Mother of such a Son.

"Mary found," says Saint Bernard, "for her and for us, the source of grace; she is the mediatrix of salvation and the restoration of ages;" this is what the Church sings, and publishes every day. The Blessed Virgin, says Saint John Damascene, is above all the praises that can be given her.

Would it be possible that God should have limited the power of a Mother so pure, so perfect, and so dear to him as Mary, to whom during his whole life he was so perfectly submissive? Be not sparing of my power, says her Son to her, with far greater reason than Solomon said to Bathsheba: "Ask, my mother, or, rather, demand what you please; for, how could I refuse you any thing when you raise to my throne those pure hands which carried me in my infancy?"

Behold the omnipotence of Mary; it is not absolute nor independent, like that of God, but it is suppliant, and not the less efficacious: and this is what the Fathers of the Church recognized when they addressed Mary in terms so humble and so respectful. "We have recourse to thee," exclaims Origen, "O blessed amongst all women!" "Intercede for us, O holy Lady, mistress, queen of heaven and earth, Mother of God," is the prayer of Saint Athanasius. "Beg of God that he may save us," is that of Saint John Chrysostom. "Look

favorably upon us," is that of Saint Basil. "Holy Virgin, assist us, poor miserable sinners," is that of Saint Augustine. "We salute thee, sovereign Queen, Mother of Mercy, source of life, consoler of our souls ; as Queen, we take thee for our protectress, we cry to thee, we send up to thee our sighs, mourning, and tears," is the prayer of the Church.

After this unanimous concurrence of all the Fathers, of all the councils, of all the sovereign Pontiffs, of all the Saints, of all the churches, what impiety to dare oppose the religious devotion of the true faithful towards the Mother of God, the homage paid her, and the praises given her ! The name of senseless devotees has been audaciously applied to those who render to Mary the homage due to the Mother of God, those who give to her the titles of honor which the holy Fathers have given her, those who believe that, by a singular privilege, she was conceived without sin, those, in fine, who acknowledge her power, and who, after God, place all their confidence in her. But, notwithstanding the venom of impiety, notwithstanding the malignity of the declared enemies of the devotion to the Mother of God, there is no true believer who is not characterized by a tender devotion towards Mary, none who does not claim her protection in all dangers, none who does not publish and maintain, even unto death, her illustrious prerogatives ! Strange thing ! After the first men of our holy religion have exhausted themselves in celebrating the greatness of Mary, after they despaired of finding terms proportioned to the sublimity of her state, after Saint Augustine, in the name of all, having confessed his insufficiency, and openly protested that he wanted words to give to the Mother of God the praises due to her, how is it that

there have been, and are even now—I do not say heretics, but Christians, who fear, and, what is more, who censure devotion and homage to her?

For ourselves, beloved brethren in Mary, let us not imitate such examples; they are pernicious, fatal for time, and still more so for eternity; but, rather, let us love Mary with all our heart, serve her faithfully, publish her praises, propagate her worship, and proclaim especially her bounties, her power, her mercies, and all her other prerogatives. We shall go over them in detail in the following exercises, after having hitherto spoken of all that may serve as a solid foundation for them.

EXAMPLE.

The very Demons are forced to confess the utility of devotion to Mary.

While Saint Dominick was preaching at Carcassona, one of the heretical Albigenses was brought before him, who, for having publicly decried the devotion to Mary, was possessed by the devil. The Saint having, in the name of God, commanded the demons to declare if all that he said concerning devotion to the blessed Mother of God was true, they immediately cried with horrible howlings: "Christians! hear what this man, who is our enemy, tells you of Mary; it is all perfectly true." They added, that they had no power over the servants of Mary, and that there are many of those who, notwithstanding their little merit, who are saved at their death by invoking her. They ended by saying: "We are forced to confess that no one is damned of all those who persevere in devotion to Mary, because Mary obtains for sinners a true repentance before death." (*Life of Saint Dominick.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria.)

Make it a duty, even a law, frequently to invoke the holy Virgin, under the august title of *Mother of God*. It is by that title that she has so great a share in the economy of our salvation. It is in virtue of that title that she bestows her graces upon us. It is rarely that she refuses any thing that is asked of her, in her quality of Mother of God. Of this we are assured by Saint Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria. He frequently repeated the prayer which he had composed, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," &c., which the Church has added to the "Ave Maria," or "Hail Mary."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bonaventure.)

August Queen of Heaven, in virtue of thy quality of Mother of God, thou canst command the powers of hell. Order it so, then, we beseech thee, that the demons may be prevented from injuring us, and invite the angels to protect and preserve us from all evil and from all danger. Amen.

TWENTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INSTRUCTION : ON CONGREGATIONS IN HONOR OF THE HOLY VIRGIN.

“They that so rule by me shall not sin; they that explain me shall have life everlasting.—*Ecc.*, ch. xxiv.

It is principally in the Congregations erected in honor of Mary that are found, in marvellous union, those two most precious advantages, which have the happiest results, for time and for eternity, in favor of those who enter into these holy confraternities. They may be truly called so many Noah's arks, because in them poor secular persons find a refuge from the deluge of temptation and sin by which the world is inundated. “In those confraternities,” says Saint Alphonso Liguori, “we shall find fewer faults committed by twenty persons who are members of them, than by one single individual who has not the happiness of belonging to them; and, indeed, it is from those academies of virtue and sanctity that so many worthy prelates, good pastors, zealous priests, fervent religious, upright magistrates, and irreproachable fathers of families, have at all times gone forth for the welfare and sanctification of the world; and all have confessedly owed their happiness to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, under whose auspices they had specially placed themselves, by enrolling themselves in those congregations in which purity of faith, solidity of devotion, and the zeal and the fervor of Christian charity

prevail ; in which people of the world feel the evangelical spirit grow within them, relishing more and more the maxims of Jesus Christ, and in which piety is nurtured by pious exhortations, by the frequent use of the sacraments, and by good example. Gregory XIII. granted great indulgences to associations of piety, which he called *Schools of Salvation*.

Sextus V. confirmed them, and granted new ones. These great Popes, and several of their successors, belonged themselves to these pious societies, before being raised to the Holy See.

The eulogies pronounced upon them by the Sovereign Pontiffs, and the liberality with which they unceasingly poured forth the treasures of the Church in favor of all those who are enrolled in them, sufficiently prove the utility and the advantages of those excellent associations. Hence the faithful can be exhorted to no devotion so solid, no devotion so proper to make peace reign in families, and Christian charity in cities.

Let us, then, if we have not already done so, enter into some one of those pious associations, all established with so much fruit, under the standard and auspices of Mary, the Queen of all Saints, the mother of all the elect, and the advocate of all Christians. There are few true associates who do not sensibly receive every day, and particularly at the hour of death, graces, assistance, and a special protection from their divine and tender Mother, especially in the confraternity of the Rosary, in that of the Scapular,—inexhaustible sources of the blessings of Heaven, and of which we shall speak in detail when treating of the solemnities of those Congregations.

But whether we are already admitted, or may have the holy desire of being admitted, let us observe the fol-

lowing rules, if we would gather abundant fruits from that seed of salvation.

1. We should never enter any of these pious associations, except to serve God and his holy Mother, and to save our own souls.

2. We should not absent ourselves from the meeting, on the appointed days, for worldly affairs ; we should endeavor to persuade as many as we can to join the societies, and to bring back those who may have fallen away from them ; we can do no better act of charity towards our neighbor, or more profitable to ourselves. This was the practice of the greatest Saints, and especially of Saint Francis de Sales, the ornament of the French episcopate, and Saint Charles Borromeo, the glory of the Italian clergy. The former fervently exhorts the laity to join the confraternities—the latter employed every means to establish and multiply them ; and not without good reason. In them an opportunity is afforded for thinking of the eternal truths (people are lost solely because they do *not* think of them) ; and how could the members of Mary's confraternities fail to think of them, with the many meditations, sermons, and instructions they hear?

3. To save one's self, it is necessary to recommend themselves to God ; and where is that done more frequently or more fervently than in a confraternity of Mary ? It is there, principally, that prayer acquires a virtue to which God can refuse nothing, whilst we ask it of him under the auspices and in the name of her who is the channel of all graces.

4. To work out our salvation, it is necessary, we know, to recommend ourselves earnestly and often to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Gate of Heaven. Now,

where can we pray to her more or better than in the midst of her children? Ah! let them be assured, in consideration of their devotion, Mary will protect them on all occasions in this world, and will come to their assistance in a particular manner at the moment of death.

5. To obtain heaven, we must persevere in good works, even to the end; and we know that, in the confraternities of Mary, that great grace is merited by the frequent use of the Sacraments, received with all the requisite dispositions, especially that of the divine Eucharist, which is, as defined by the Council of Trent, an antidote against sin. Finally, in the Confraternities of the Blessed Virgin, many acts of humility, of charity, and of mortification are practised in her honor, which powerfully contribute to obtain for us her intercession with her adorable Son, for time and for eternity.

It would also be very advantageous to establish in every parish, in honor of the *Mother of God*, a select or secret congregation of the most fervent members, who would observe the following practices: To make a half-hour's spiritual reading; to recite the vespers, complin, and litanies of the Virgin; to practice mental prayer, of at least a quarter of an hour, upon the Passion of our Lord, to examine their conscience every evening; to make more frequent communions; to give some alms, imposing on themselves some mortification in honor of Mary; to avoid, for her sake, all games and worldly conversations; to visit Confraternities, and the sick; and daily to recommend to God the souls in purgatory who were most devout to Mary.

Great fruits will be derived from these practices, and by them we shall render ourselves infinitely pleasing to

that divine Mother, who will, in her turn, load us with blessings, graces, and consolations.

EXAMPLE.

Signal Favors obtained in this Life by the Members of Mary's Confraternities.

Father Croiset relates, that in 1586, a young man, who was at the point of death, fell asleep; then, having awoke, he said to his confessor: "Ah, father, I was in great danger of being damned, if Mary had not come to my assistance; already had the devils laid my sins before the tribunal of the Lord, and already were they preparing to drag me down to hell, but the Blessed Virgin said to them: 'Whither would you take that young man? What have you to do with one of my servants, who has so long been a member of my Congregation?' So the devils took flight, and I was saved from their hands." At Naples, the Duke del Popoli, being at the article of death, said to his son: "Remember that the little good I have done during my life, I am convinced I owe to the Confraternity; so I can leave you nothing better than the Congregation of Mary. I rejoice more in my having belonged to it than in having been Duke del Popoli." (*Christian Year, by Father Croiset.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Francis de Sales.)

One of the most assiduous cares which Saint Francis de Sales had for sanctifying souls, was the use of Confraternities in honor of the Blessed Virgin. St. Charles Borromeo urges confessors to make their penitents join them. Let us follow these wise opinions by enrolling

ourselves, as soon as we can, under the standards of Mary, and make all who are dependent upon us do the same.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Bernard.)

O Mary! may we have access to thy Son through thee. May he who gave himself to us by thee, receive us also by thee. Thou art our Queen, our mediatrix. Recommend us, then, and present us to thy Son! We implore thee, by the grace with which thou hast been honored—by the mercy thou hast shown to the world—grant, in fine, that He who, through thee, clothed himself with our weakness, may, through thee, make us sharers in his happiness and glory. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND IN WHAT IT MUST ESSENTIALLY CONSIST.

“Now, therefore, ye children, hear me : blessed are they that keep my ways.”—*Prov.*, chap. viii.

It is the Church herself, who cannot err, that applies to Mary those touching words : “Mary,” says she, “disposes of the celestial treasures.” It greatly imports us, therefore, to know by what means we can obtain them

from her ineffable charity ! Now, these means are contained in the practice prescribed to us by her worship, or the devotion which we, on so many accounts, owe to her. Let us, then, examine in what it essentially consists, and what are its characteristics.

There are three acts, or three principal sentiments, which constitute the essential parts of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. These three essential sentiments are : Firstly, a sentiment of respect, of veneration, of homage, of submission, proportioned to the dignity of *Mother of God*. Secondly, a sentiment of confidence in her power and in her goodness, which makes us have recourse to her in our necessities. Thirdly, a sentiment of tender and filial love, corresponding to her perfections, and to her quality of our mother, her goodness and her benefits to us.

There is what must be called the essential part of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and thence unfailingly arise all the other sentiments or affections which must perfect that devotion.

Those three sentiments of *respect, confidence, and love*, are in the essence of devotion to Mary, so that whatever is not that, or does not proceed from that, or tend to that, must be regarded as foreign to it. Whosoever shall fail in any one of these true and sincere sentiments, will certainly fail in devotion to Mary. On the contrary, whosoever shall have that devotion, will be penetrated with love for her, with admiration for her greatness, with tender confidence in her, with an ardent desire to consecrate themselves to her service, and to merit her protection ; even the most guilty sinner will conceive the hope of his conversion through the intercession of that divine mediatrix. But is not one of the principal

features of devotion to Mary the *imitation of her virtues?*

That imitation is rather the fruit and the effect of the devotion than its essence ; for, if the essential part of devotion to the Blessed Virgin consisted in the imitation of her virtues, wherever that imitation was not found, the devotion could not be ; and, therefore, it would be only just and holy souls who could pretend to that devotion. All sinners would be, consequently, excluded from it, and that would be a sentiment contrary to that of the Church, which calls Mary the hope and the refuge of sinners, and invites them all to have recourse to her with great confidence.

A sinner may be devout to Mary, without being yet an imitator of her virtues. We must, therefore, place the essence of devotion to the Blessed Virgin in sentiments which are common to the just and sinners ; since a sinner, like a just man, may be touched with love and respect for, and confidence in, that divine Advocate. Daily experience leaves no doubt that these dispositions are really found in sinners, who, consequently, practice divers exercises in honor of the Blessed Virgin. They honor her festivals, they join confraternities which are dedicated to her, and acquit themselves of certain duties which they require ; they fast ; they give alms ; they visit her chapels ; they invoke her assiduously ; now all that evidently belongs to genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Whereupon we must make the following reflection. Devotion to Mary, like all the virtues, has divers degrees of perfection ; thus, in an inferior degree, where devotion is very perfect, it produces the imitation of the Blessed Virgin's virtues. This renders the individual more conformable to her, more acceptable in her sight,

and more and more deserving of her favor and protection. That same devotion may be weak and imperfect, and as yet produce no effect of imitation. It is so in many sinners ; but how imperfect soever it is in their hearts, still it is there, and is a germ of life implanted there by God, which at length produces, if cultivated, the fruit of true penance and of perfect conversion. It is, therefore, of essential consequence for the salvation of those poor sinners, that they do not stifle, or pluck from their hearts, that germ of life. And that is just what happens when an unenlightened zeal makes all devotion to the Blessed Virgin consist in practising her virtues, and recognizes no salutary devotion beyond that. For, what follows from that doctrine, and from declamations against those who believe themselves devout to Mary, although they still live in sin, when they are told that theirs is a false devotion, injurious even to the *Mother of God*, who favors neither impenitence nor the enemies of her Son ; that it is only hypocrisy, a vain and criminal confidence ;—what follows from such doctrine ? Why, the sad and fatal effect of making the sinner abandon the holy practices established to do honor to the Blessed Virgin, and to merit her protection ; to weaken in their hearts the love they bear her, and to destroy the confidence which sinners ought to have in her mercy.

Let us attach ourselves, therefore, as regards devotion to the Blessed Virgin, to those three essential characteristics of *respect*, *confidence*, and *love*. Let us employ all our eloquence and all our strength to excite those three sentiments towards Mary ; and when we shall have said all that is necessary to that end, let us beware of spoiling our work by unseasonable declamations, which are

only calculated to display the good sentiments of those to whom we speak. Let us, on the contrary, send them away full of admiration for the greatness of that incomparable Virgin ; her goodness ; her mercy ; her power ; her intercession ;—in a word, full of veneration, of confidence, of gratitude, and love for her. Ah ! where is the sinner who does not know that salvation is not to be gained without renouncing sin and doing penance ? But there are means of attaining those : devotion to Mary is one of the most powerful to obtain from God that precious grace, and that is what must be said everywhere, and to every one. Nevertheless, that need not prevent a wise and discreet zeal from remarking that presumptuous devotees may be found who abuse what is proclaimed concerning the influence of the Blessed Virgin for the salvation of sinners who have recourse to her ; but care must then be taken that what is said against their presumption does not recoil on the exercises of devotion to Mary, and inspire contempt and neglect of them, as so many practices useless in the state of sin. We must, on the contrary, exhort to perseverance in those holy practices, as a true means of conversion. We must, especially, proclaim openly that Mary, after God, merits all our *respect*, that she merits all our *confidence*, that she merits, finally, all our *love* ; and make it felt, that the more lively those feelings are in our hearts, the more perfect will be our devotion to Mary.

EXAMPLE.

The young Libertine converted by Devotion to Mary.

Father Segneri relates a very remarkable case, in his book entitled *The Christian Instructed*. "A young man,"

he says, "at Rome, went to confession ; he was addicted to the most shameful habits. The confessor welcomed him with much charity, and, touched by his misery, told him that devotion to Mary might deliver him from that accursed vice. He gave him for his penance to say a *Hail Mary* morning and evening till his next confession, rising and going to bed. He also engaged him to make her the offering of his eyes, his hands, and his whole body, praying her to regard him as belonging to her, and to kiss the ground three times. The young man performed this penance, but at first with little amendment. Nevertheless, the confessor continued to exhort him earnestly not to desist, and animated him with confidence in Mary. The penitent went to travel in divers places for several years. On his return to Rome, he presented himself to the same confessor, who was at once astonished and delighted to see him entirely changed and corrected. "My son," said he, "how did you obtain from God so great a favor?"

"Father," replied the young man, "I never ceased to practice, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the devotion which you recommended to me." He persevered in that state, and died holily.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Francis de Sales.)

Never fail in your accustomed practices of devotion to Mary. Saint Francis de Sales daily recited the chaplet of the holy Virgin ; and, notwithstanding the numerous affairs with which he was charged, he never failed to do so. This fidelity merited for him the protection of Mary in an infinity of difficult circumstances.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By St. Thomas Aquinas.)

Virgin full of goodness, Mother of Mercy, I recommend to thee my body and my soul, my thoughts, my actions, my life, and my death. O my Queen ! help me, and deliver me from all the snares of the devil ; obtain for me the grace of loving my Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, with a true and perfect love, and after him, O Mary, to love thee with all my heart and above all things. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE RESPECT DUE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN,
FOR THE CHOICE MADE OF HER BY GOD.

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways.”—*Prov.*, chap. viii.

THE respect, veneration, homage, and submission due to a person, must be measured by their elevation, their dignity, and their greatness. Thus, to comprehend the respect due to the Blessed Virgin, it is necessary to speak of her greatness. Now, all her greatness is founded on the dignity of *Mother of God*. It is, therefore, on that Divine Maternity that we must pause. Let us meditate some moments in silence, on that admirable and ineffable subject.

Let us first cast a look on the Divine Majesty—on that

immense and infinite Being, before whom angels, men, the whole world, and a million of worlds more perfect than this, are as nothing. Full of the idea of that infinite greatness, let us cast a second look on Mary, Mother of that great God in the person of Jesus Christ, and who can truly say to him: "Thou art my Son; it is in my womb, and of my substance, that thou wert formed. I gave thee birth and life." Let us consider a Virgin, who received a species of authority over her God inseparable from her quality of Mother; who sees her God become in some sort dependent upon her, by becoming her Son; and who, in virtue of the quality of Mother, enters, in regard to her God, on all the rights of a Mother in regard to her Son.

Let us consider a Virgin, who, by her Divine Maternity, entered into a veritable alliance, the closest possible (almost a hypostatical union), with the three divine Persons of the adorable Trinity, and was united to them in a manner so intimate, that nothing approaches or can approach more nearly to God; who, in becoming the Mother of one only Son, begotten by the eternal Father from all eternity, in a manner shows his divine fecundity; who, in becoming the true Mother of the Son, enters naturally, by the right of maternity, into possession of the goods of that same Son, and becomes at the same time the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, in that ineffable manner peculiar to herself alone.

Oh! you who read all these things, have you ever noted them well? Have you fathomed them? Have you comprehended them? And, at this simple exposition of them, which I have given, are you not seized with astonishment, considering the Blessed Virgin in that prodigious elevation, at that point of greatness, in that im-

ments of glory? What graces and perfections, what sanctity, what spiritual treasures, what supernatural gifts, what privileges, must be in proportion to that infinite dignity! But you, angels of heaven, principalities, powers, dominations, chérubim, seraphim,—you, who are the ministers of that supreme God,—you, who in presence of that sovereign Majesty truly and justly regard yourselves as nothing,—do even you comprehend the dignity and excellence of that Virgin whom that infinite God calls by the name of *Mother*, and who calls God her Son? We must here exclaim, with Saint Peter Damian: “Let every creature be utterly silent, let every creature tremble with respect, and let none have the temerity to fix his gaze upon the immensity of that glory!”

“Mary is the most worthy Mother of God,” says Saint Bonaventure; “and God himself cannot form one more elevated. Yes, God may well create a more perfect world, a loftier heaven, but he cannot create a more elevated Mother than the Mother of God.”

“Mary,” adds Saint Peter Damian, “is a work so perfect, that nothing is seen above that work but God himself.”

“When the glory of Mary is in question,” exclaims Saint Bernard, “my devotion will not allow me to be silent; and my mind can find nothing worthy of her. For what tongue, were it even the tongue of angels, could worthily celebrate the praises of the Virgin Mother of God?”

EXAMPLE.

Model of the Respect that we ought to have for Mary.

(By Saint Mechthilda.)

Saint Stephen, king of Hungary, more famous for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin than for the kingly qualities he brought to the throne, had so profound a respect for every thing connected with Mary, that he dared not even to pronounce her holy name, and was therefore accustomed to call her *the Great Lady*. After his example, all the Hungarians had the same respect for Mary, and gave her the same title; and when it happened that her august name, or any of her prerogatives, were mentioned in their presence, they appeared penetrated with sentiments of the most profound veneration, even falling on their knees and bowing down to the ground.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

Say a Hail Mary as often as you awake in the night, so that the Virgin may be always present to your mind. A good priest recommended this pious practice to his penitents. Those who were faithful to it, derived therefrom great fruits of piety. Saint Mechthilda never neglected it.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By the celebrated Chancellor Gerson.)

O Mary, thou art blessed above all creatures of thy sex, because it is thou alone who hast removed malediction, drawn down benediction, and opened the gates of heaven.

Yes, justly dost thou bear the name of Mary, which signifies Star of the Sea. For even as the star guides mariners to the port, so, divine Virgin, we hope that thou wilt conduct us to eternal rest, where, with all the saints, we shall bless thee. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE ALLIANCE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN WITH THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS; AND FIRST WITH THE ETERNAL FATHER.

“I was the first-born of every creature.”—*Prov.*, chap. viii.

THE Eternal Father, in choosing Mary to be the Mother of his only Son, made her contract an infallible alliance with the three august Persons of the adorable Trinity. That is to say, that she became in a special manner the daughter of God the Father, the Mother of God the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost; three characters which we are going to develop, and which will give us the highest, the most sublime idea of Mary, inspiring us with the greatest veneration for her.

Let us consider, then, in the first place, that the Eternal Father raised Mary to the degree of greatness befitting her who was to be the Mother of his Word; and that the only Son, who is begotten by him from all eternity, equal to him in power and in majesty, the infinite object of his love, was also the only Son of Mary;—begotten of her substance in time, Son of Mary by nature, in-

asmuch as he is man,—Son of the Eternal Father by nature, inasmuch as he is God, consubstantial with the Father. Now, the Eternal Father, in predestinating her to be the Mother of his Son, must also have communicated to her ineffable perfections, to make her worthy of being the mother of the Word; worthy of that incomprehensible companionship into which she entered with the Eternal Father. It was necessary that the Divine Maternity should be sustained by the communication of the divine perfections, of which the Mother was capable; and as in the Eternal Father paternity is essentially connected with all the attributes of the Divinity, it was likewise expedient that in Mary the maternity should have a proportionate connection with those perfections. The Eternal Father owed it to his own glory, he owed it to the glory of his Son, for whom it was necessary, to prepare a Mother worthy of such a Son. And what does not that word convey? A Mother worthy of the Eternal Word! Finally, he had to associate with himself a Mother worthy to be the Mother of the same Son of whom he is the Father. Such is the beautiful thought of Saint Bernard, in his second sermon on the Annunciation. It is true, then, to say that the august Mary is in a rank in which she can never have an equal; in which she necessarily sees beneath her all that is, all that has been, and all that shall be. That prodigious elevation was essential to her, entering first into alliance with the Eternal Father; and that alliance is the first, the surest basis whereon to judge of the greatness of Mary.

Let us merit, by a truly Christian conduct, her powerful protection; consecrating ourselves to her, loving her, imitating her virtues—especially her ardent love for God, her profound humility, and her angelic purity.

EXAMPLE.

Visible Marks of the Protection of Mary, in the midst of Great Dangers.

The venerable mother, Catherine de Bar, having been sent to Badonvilliers some time after her profession, received a very special mark of her protection on a very critical occasion. An officer, who had formerly sought her in marriage, having learned where she was, went and demanded to see her. The chaste spouse of Jesus Christ refused. That refusal threw the officer into such a rage, that he threatened to proceed to the last extremities. To place her out of his reach, she was removed elsewhere, and intrusted to the care of a sutler of known integrity, who concealed her among the packages in his cart. The officer, having gained intelligence of her departure, sent soldiers in pursuit. The sutler is arrested, and interrogated; his baggage is searched, and his bales even pierced through with swords, at the very moment when the venerable mother was supplicating her powerful protection with all possible fervor. That was sufficient to render all efforts vain. She escaped so great a danger, and, by the visible protection of the Blessed Virgin, she safely arrived at the term of her journey. (*Life of Catherine de Bar.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Louis, king of France.)

That religious monarch observed a great number of practices in honor of the Blessed Virgin. It was his

pious custom every day, after his morning prayers, to offer her in spirit his respectful homage, in the most celebrated shrines wherein she was specially honored.

In imitation of that holy king, and of so many other devout clients of Mary, let us honor her in this manner; uniting, in mind and heart, with the faithful who visit the temples which are specially consecrated to her in all parts of the world.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Cardinal de Bérulle.)

Mother of grace and of mercy, I choose thee as the mother of my soul, in honor of what God himself was pleased to do in choosing thee for his Mother. Queen of angels and of men, I recognize thee as my sovereign, on account of the dependence in which it pleased Jesus, my Saviour and my God, to be to thee as his Mother; and in that quality, I give thee all power over my soul and my life, as far as I can give thee, according to God. O holy Virgin, look upon me as belonging to thee; and by thy goodness, treat me as the subject of thy power, and as the object of thy mercy. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE ALLIANCE OF THE HOLY VIRGIN WITH
JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY SON OF GOD.

"I will bless her, and of her I will give thee a son whom I will bless."
—*Gen.*, chap. xvii.

RICH in the benedictions wherewith the eternal Father loaded her, let us now consider Mary contracting alliance with the divine Word, and entering into communication with him by the most precious, the most abundant graces.

The eternal Word, in choosing Mary for his Mother, obliged himself, by that choice, to have for her the sentiments of a son,—to honor her, to love her, to do her all the good that becomes a son, and such a son as he. Now, the honors and the tokens of love that a son owes to his mother ought to be proportioned to his own dignity, and wealth, and power. A king who should leave his mother in the rank of ordinary women, would doubtless be wanting in the love and honor which he owes to her. It is the voice of nature, it is a law engraved on the heart of man, that a mother should enter, in part, on all the possessions of her son; that a good son should possess nothing that filial tenderness does not make him consider as, in some measure, common to him and his mother. On this principle, the Son of God must have procured for his Mother advantages worthy of himself; suitable and proportionate to his infinite greatness.

Nothing can give us a greater or more just idea of that admirable communication, than those beautiful

words of Saint Bernardine, or rather that sublime eulogy which he made on Mary, saying, that "her divine Son had made her to his own likeness."

Let us first remark the close and inseparable union which God would have to exist between Jesus and Mary, in all times, in all places, and in all states in which the Mother and the Son can be considered. Reading the sacred text, we perceive that what the Holy Ghost said of the Word, and of eternal wisdom, the Church applies to Mary. According to that application, it is of faith that before the creation of the world she was united to her Son in the eternal decrees of Providence. She, with her Son, was the first object that God proposed to himself in his works. "I was the first-born of every creature." She entered into all the views of God, when he laid the foundations of this vast universe, and established the beautiful order that is seen to prevail in it. "When he prepared the heavens I was present: when with a certain law and compass he inclosed the depths." (*Prov.*, chap. viii.)

It is an admirable thing that the Church has applied to Mary all those expressions of wisdom which are proper to Jesus Christ. This application may be regarded as made by the direction of the Holy Ghost himself; for what does the Church design to teach us, in thus using for the portrait of the Mother the same colors and the same features employed by the Holy Ghost in the portrait of the Son, if it be not this union and this admirable resemblance which it has pleased God to establish between Jesus Christ and Mary?

If we now descend from eternity to time, we shall remark that same union from the beginning of the world; in the promises made to the patriarchs, in the oracles of

the prophets, in the figures and symbols of the old law almost everywhere, Mary is promised, prophesied, prefigured, with her Son. The first figure of Jesus Christ was Adam; the first figure of Mary was Eve. All the illustrious men of the old law were figures of Christ; all the illustrious women were figures of Mary. A thousand mysterious symbols represented Jesus Christ, a thousand other symbols represented Mary.

But let us consider this union between Jesus Christ and Mary, apart from shadows and figures, in the reality, in the new law, from the coming of the Redeemer. There it is that it shines forth in an admirable manner, in the mysteries of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Mary is united with her Son, by the most intimate union in the Incarnation. The eternal Word, inclosed in the womb of Mary, in some sort forms with her but one and the same thing; thence he passes into her arms during his whole infancy, resting on her virginal bosom, nourishing himself with her milk, and the substance of the Mother becomes the substance of the Son. In his hidden life he passes thirty years uninterruptedly with his Mother in the same house, at the same table, in the same exercises, in the same sentiments, in the same fortune, in the same external lot. In his apostolic life, in his suffering life, in his glorious life, Mary always shares with him his labors, his pains, his joys, and his glory.

Let us come to the communication of the qualities proper to Jesus Christ, and which he shared with his divine Mother,—wishing to render her like unto him in what he possesses, similar in her perfections, in her virtues, in her qualities, in her privileges, in her power, in her glory. In a word, let us take a closer view of this admirable resemblance between Mary and her Son.

Resemblance in perfections. On the one side, Jesus Christ possessing in an infinite degree goodness, wisdom, power, mercy; on the other, Mary, adorned by her Son in all those qualities in a degree far beyond those of angels and of men. Jesus is goodness by essence,—that is to say, that in him is the assemblage of all divine and uncreated perfections; and it was his will that Mary should participate in that goodness, by uniting in herself all created perfections to a degree of excellence which elevates that Virgin as far above other creatures as she surpasses them all by her dignity of Mother of God,—that is to say, that all other created dignity disappears before hers. Jesus is wisdom itself; and he filled Mary with that wisdom to such a degree, that the Church has been warranted in calling her the seat and the throne of wisdom. Jesus is the Father of mercy, and Mary deserved to be called the Mother of Mercy. The power of Jesus is infinite; and he has, in some sort, rendered his Mother all-powerful, as some of the Fathers express it, by making that divine Mother the mistress and the dispenser of his graces and his treasures.

Resemblance in the purest virtues. On the one side, Jesus Christ is the humblest, the meekest, the holiest, the most patient, and the most charitable of all men; on the other, he has rendered Mary the humblest, the meekest, the holiest, and the most charitable of all women, and of all creatures.

Resemblance in qualities and titles of honor. The titles and qualities which the Church attributes to Mary, correspond entirely to the qualities which are proper to Jesus Christ. Jesus is our King—Mary, our Queen; Jesus, our Master—Mary, our Mistress; Jesus, our Father—Mary, our Mother; Jesus, our Ad-

vocate—Mary, our Mediatrix; Jesus, our hope, our consolation, our life—Mary, the hope, the help, the consolation, the life of Christians; Jesus, the way to heaven—Mary, the Gate of heaven, the mystical ladder by which to reach it; Jesus, our guide, our light—Mary, the star which lights and directs us, and conducts us to the port of salvation; Jesus, the author of grace—Mary, the Mother of grace; Jesus, compared to the sun, by the abundance of living lights of which he is the source, and which he sheds upon all men—Mary, compared to the moon, by the mildness of her light and the influence she sheds upon the whole Church.

Resemblance in privileges. Jesus, impeccable by his nature—Mary exempted from all sin by grace; Jesus exempt, by right of the divine personality, from all sin, original and actual—Mary enjoying the same exemption, by a special and peculiar privilege; Jesus, virginal—Mary virginal; Jesus, incorruptible in the tomb—Mary, likewise, incorruptible; Jesus, rising again on the third day—Mary, rising again at the same period; Jesus, ascending to heaven, in body and in soul—Mary, ascending thither after him, in the same state; Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father—Mary, seated beside her Son.

Resemblance in power, riches, and glory. Jesus, Master of all good things, Author of all graces, King of lights, Lord of heaven and earth—Mary, mistress of the world, Queen of angels and of men, dispenser of all graces. All power was given to the Son, by the Father; and all power, though dependently, has been given the Mother by the Son. All bend the knee to Jesus, in heaven, on earth, and in hell; and all bend the knee to Mary—angels, men, and devils.

Finally, *Resemblance in the honors which the Church*

renders to Jesus Christ, and which he would also share with his divine Mother. He has willed that he should be announced by the Church throughout the universe; that she should be revered by all the peoples by whom he is adored; that temples should be raised to her glory; that there should always be some particular monument consecrated to her memory; that she, together with himself, should be the object of the most tender love of his servants; that the name of Mary should be inseparable from his in the hearts and on the lips of the faithful; that the praises of his Mother should daily be united with his in the divine Office; that all the mysteries relating to his Mother, from her Immaculate Conception to her Assumption into heaven, should be celebrated like his own; that, even as the Church established feasts in honor of the Son, she should establish similar ones in honor of the Mother;—the Passion of Jesus, the Passion of Mary; the name of Jesus, the name of Mary; the greatness of Jesus, the greatness of Mary. It was his will to be commonly exposed to the eyes of the faithful, in the arms of his Mother; that she, like himself, should be painted above the Seraphim. In a word, that adorable Son has omitted nothing that could render that admirable likeness, that inseparable union, that great participation of goods between him and his Mother, striking and sensible.

All the traits which I have pointed out show with what perfection Jesus fulfilled the natural obligations of a son in regard to his mother. We must judge of the greatness of the Blessed Virgin by the greatness of her Son. We must regulate by that Son, the infinite model, all that we should say or think of his Mother. She has, by grace and participation, what the Son has by nature and in his own right.

Finally, there is a homily attributed to Saint Augustine, which contains the foundation of all the privileges of the Blessed Virgin. That homily is the third on the Assumption. The author, says, speaking of the incorruption of the sacred body of Mary in the tomb: "If that privilege belongs not to Mary, it belongs to the Son, whom she brought into the world." It were to be wished, that those who are so much afraid of excess in the praises of the Blessed Virgin, should meditate attentively upon that phrase—*Congruit Filio quem genuit*. It contains the principles of all the greatness of the Blessed Virgin, and the solution of all doubts, of all difficulties; for it is a general reply to all that can be found extraordinary in the Blessed Virgin.

EXAMPLE.

Even Infidels experience the effects of Mary's Charity, on invoking her Holy Name.

In whatever clime soever Mary has exercised the influence of the power she has received from her divine Son, that influence has been efficacious.

It is related, that in the Indies, an islander being, as he believed, on his death-bed, deserted by every one, had recourse to Mary, whose power he had heard celebrated by Christians. The Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and said: "Behold! I am she whom you invoke. Go, become a Christian." Suddenly he felt himself cured, and sought out a missionary, who instructed and baptized him. Many other Indians were converted because of this miracle. Let us, likewise, have recourse to Mary, and we may rest assured of experiencing the efficacy of her power in whatever situation we may find ourselves in.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Blessed Francis Patrizzi.)

Ask, every day of Mary, the grace of final perseverance. The Blessed Francis Patrizzi did so, on his knees, night and morning. He thereby obtained the most signal favors, and died in the odor of sanctity.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By the Venerable Abbé de Celles.)

Thou hast found favor before God, amiable Virgin, because thou didst conceive the Son of God. Thou hast also received all graces, O most humble Mary, in order to assist us in our necessities; and that is what thou dost truly do. Thou aidest the good by sustaining them in goodness; thou aidest the bad by disposing them to receive the divine mercy. Thou protectest the dying against the snares of the devil; and even after their death, thou dost still assist them, by receiving their souls and conducting them to the abode of the blessed, whither we pray thee to conduct us also. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE ALLIANCE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN WITH
THE HOLY GHOST, AS HER DIVINE SPOUSE.

“The Holy Ghost will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High will overshadow thee.”—*St. Luke*, chap. i.

It is very glorious for Mary—and hearts that truly love her are ravished with joy because of it—that the three Persons of the most holy Trinity, together, hastened to enrich her with all the gifts of grace, in the alliance which she contracts with each of them in particular. We have seen, in the two preceding instructions, how the Eternal Father and his divine Word had loaded her with favors; let us see in this what the Holy Ghost operates in her, choosing her for his divine Spouse.

The Holy Ghost, elevating Mary in an ineffable manner, must have rendered her worthy of that noble alliance. In communicating to her an eminent holiness, he must have given her the rights of a wife over the possessions of her Spouse, and shared them with her as far as she was susceptible of receiving them. I represent to myself a great king, who chooses for his wife the daughter of one of his subjects. She becomes queen,—she shares the throne with the king,—she shares all his honors, all his titles, all his qualities, all his goods,—she enters into partnership in all that the king possesses. Here is a figure of what happens to Mary, in regard to the Holy Ghost, her divine Spouse. Hence Saint Bernard

fears not to say: "That at the moment when the Holy Ghost descended on Mary, she received an extent and an abundance of graces as great as a creature can receive in this world." Thence arises that opinion common in the Church, that Mary is the dispenser of graces; that it is through her hands the Holy Ghost delights to pour them forth. It is in this quality of beloved Spouse that she shares with the Holy Ghost the name of *Consoler*. Hence the Church calls her the *Comfort of the Afflicted*, as she gives her the name of *Mother of Grace* and *Mother of Mercy*.

What more might we not say on a subject that is, in some sort, inexhaustible? But after having established so many considerations on the excellence and greatness of the Blessed Virgin, drawn from her divine Maternity, in this and the two preceding instructions, after having developed the greatness and majesty comprised in her triple alliance with the three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity, it is superfluous to add any others.

We have, doubtless, said enough for the end that we proposed to ourselves,—which was to show what should be our sentiments of respect, of veneration, and of love, for that incomparable Virgin. Such is her triple alliance with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that she should only be thought of as great, admirable, ineffable; infinite in graces, in virtues, in perfections, in power, in goodness, in glory, and in all sorts of privileges. That she should only be spoken of in the noblest and loftiest manner; always with a firm persuasion that nothing can be said of her comparable to what she is; and that should all the angels unite with men to praise her, they would never praise her as becomes the sublime dignity to which she is elevated. Let us imbue

ourselves on this subject, with the beautiful words of the celebrated Abbé Francon, in his "Library of the Fathers:" "The praise of Mary is an inexhaustible spring, the more copious the more it is drawn from."

Let us never hold, then, any other language; and let us bear in mind this lesson given us by the High-Chancellor of Paris, Gerson, when he says: "With respect to Mary, what is most to be feared is, falling into error in speaking unworthily of her. For, when there is question of praising her, never will the praises of men be equal to her merits."

We must hold, it may be said, to what faith teaches us, and attribute nothing to the Blessed Virgin which has not a solid foundation in Scripture. That is true; but what more solid foundation can be desired than the Divine Maternity? The Gospel has said scarcely any thing of Mary, except that she is *Mother of Jesus*. Yes, say the Saints, but in saying that, the Gospel has said all. Let it be concluded from this, as well as from what we have demonstrated in the two preceding exercises, touching the respect due to the Blessed Virgin, that if respect be measured by her dignity, her elevation, her power,—all these qualities being ineffable in Mary,—our respect must have no limits. We know, on that point, the doctrine of the Church. She attributes to Mary a worship, which is called *hyperdulia*—that is to say, above that of all the saints and all the angels. The Blessed Virgin forms alone a separate rank; so the honors rendered to her should be proportioned to her infinite elevation.

What effect, then, should faith in this truth produce in us? With what veneration for the Blessed Virgin should they not penetrate frail feeble creatures like us?

How should we appear before her, whom all that is great in heaven approach trembling! The highest seraphim prostrate themselves, if we may so speak, at the feet of Mary. Yet, men and sinners are but feebly impressed by the splendor of so high a majesty! Let us never approach Mary, to pay her our homage, to sing her praises, or to recite prayers in her honor, without being penetrated to the very depth of our souls; considering ourselves in her presence as nothing but dust, deeming ourselves unworthy to be of the number of her servants, and esteeming ourselves happy that she suffers us at her feet, that she deigns to hear and to receive our prayers. This sentiment will extend itself to all that is connected with her—as her images and objects which are consecrated to her, and all that has any relation to her, will become precious to us. We shall venerate her confraternities, her prayers—all that serves to remind us of her; and it is thus that we shall establish ourselves in true devotion to Mary, with which, says Saint John Damascene, God inspires only those whom it is his will to save.

EXAMPLE.

A Gentleman miraculously Cured, in Reward of his Devotion to Mary.

The son of a prince, named Eschille, being sent by his father to Hildesheim, in Saxony, to study there, led a very disorderly life. He fell dangerously ill, and was soon reduced to the last extremity. After a frightful vision, he invoked Mary, and promised to devote himself to her service. Mary obtained his cure and his conversion. Eschille published the favor he had received, lived holily, preserved ever after a great love for Mary, and became archbishop in Denmark, where he procured

many conversions. He subsequently resigned the archbishopric, and became a monk at Clairvaux, where, after four years of a penitent and retired life, he died in the odor of sanctity.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(Revealed by herself to one of her faithful servants, and mentioned by Saint Alphonso Liguori.)

Return thanks to the Eternal Father for the power he gave to Mary; thank the Son of God for the wisdom he gave to Mary his Mother; and the Holy Ghost, for the love that he gave to Mary his Spouse. With this intention, we ought to say three "Our Fathers," three "Hail Marys," and three "Glory be to the Father," in honor of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. It was Mary herself who revealed this practice to one of her most faithful servants, adding, that she much loved to be honored in that way.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Anselm.)

Come to our assistance, O most clement Queen, and regard not the multitude of our sins! Consider that our Creator clothed himself with flesh in thy womb, not to damn sinners, but to save them. If thou hadst been made Mother of God only for thine own advantage, it might be said that it imports thee little whether we be saved or damned. But God was made man for thy salvation, and for that of all mankind. What would thy power and thy glory avail us, if thou didst not make us sharers in thy happiness? Aid us, protect us; we commend ourselves to thee. Grant that we may eternally love and serve Jesus Christ. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE
ASCENSION.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE POWER OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, AS
DAUGHTER OF THE FATHER, MOTHER OF THE SON, AND
SPOUSE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

“The king said to her: What is thy petition, that it may be granted thee? Although thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it.”—*Esther*, chap. vii.

THE Blessed Virgin has great power in heaven to aid us in our necessities. This is one of those truths which reason, faith, and Christian education from childhood render so evident and so familiar, that the most energetic discourses can add nothing to the impression they make of themselves. The Blessed Virgin has great power in heaven. She is the beloved daughter of the eternal Father; she is the Mother of the co-equal Son; she is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Queen of heaven and earth, Mary, the daughter of the eternal Father, that beloved daughter, that spotless daughter, next to Jesus Christ the most perfect resemblance of the divine Father, more acceptable in his eyes, and more lovely than all creatures together, after Jesus Christ the most precious object of his predilection. Mother of that Son who is equal to the Father, and God like him; Mother of that Son in the proper and natural sense, as truly and really his Mother as the women who brought us into the world are our mothers, with a natural right over that divine Son, a right inseparably attached to the quality

of Mother. Now what can be imagined more powerful over the heart of a good son, than the prayer of a good mother? Mary is, also, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. That quality belongs to her no less than the two others. And what can be said more efficacious, to procure the influence of a princess in a court, than that she is the spouse of the prince, the object of his tenderness—she herself more beloved than the whole court, than the whole kingdom together?

Since Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and as she has over the heart of her divine Spouse that power a tenderly beloved wife must have, she can soften him, influence him, disarm his anger, and obtain the greatest graces; for this is the characteristic of a tenderly and entirely beloved spouse.

Finally, Mary is the Queen of heaven and of earth; and what grander idea can be given of a person in a kingdom than to say that she is its sovereign? If Mary is Queen of the Universe, it follows that she has the power of a queen, she can do good to her subjects, and assist them in their need, according to her good pleasure, and the good pleasure of her Son. She can deliver them from the evils that threaten or oppress them; she can render them happy.

These are truths that convince by their simple expression, truths which are manifest of themselves, and which no artifice of the enemies of the Church will ever be able to obscure.

Accordingly, the Fathers and the holy Doctors, when they speak of the power of the Blessed Virgin, rest upon these considerations, and, enlightened by divine light, they do not hesitate to say, that “all power is given to her in heaven and on earth to obtain whatsoever she will.”

Says Saint Germanus, of Constantinople: "Thou hast the power of a Mother with God, and nothing can be denied to thee, since God thy Son deigns to obey thee in every thing as the most tender and the purest of mothers."

Mary is the Queen of Angels in heaven, the Queen of Men on earth, the mistress of the demons in hell. "Jesus Christ," says Saint Bernard, "wishing to redeem mankind, confided the ransom to Mary."

"Mary received the most perfect name that a creature can receive, after that of her Son; it is the august name of *Mother, of God*. In virtue of that name, she has a species of authority and a natural dominion over the empire of the universe, so that at that great name all may bend the knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell; in virtue of that name she received the plenitude of grace, not only for herself, but also for all men." It is thus that Gerson, that great servant of the Blessed Virgin, speaks of her power in his discourse on the Annunciation; and in that on the holy name of Mary, he says: "No grace comes from heaven without passing through the hands of Mary."

But this is dwelling too long on a point which no one doubts. In fact, who, in Christianity, has ever doubted the power of the Mother of God? She can do all, we know, if she wills our salvation—if she chooses to employ her influence—to obtain it; yet, once more, we shall have all to hope for our happiness: but, will she thus befriend us? Will not our unworthiness and our sins prevent her from using her power in our favor, and interesting herself for us? That Virgin so pure, so holy, so zealous for the glory of her Son, will she not be repelled? This relates to the goodness of the Blessed

Virgin, and shall make the subject of the following instruction.

EXAMPLE.

The Prisoner, freed from his fetters, goes forth from his Prison, on recommending himself to Mary.

The blessed Jerome, the founder of the Symmachians, at first governor of a city, was captured by the enemy, and confined in the dungeon of a tower. In that sad situation he had recourse to Mary, and made a vow to go on a pilgrimage to Trevoux, if she restored him to liberty. On the instant, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, broke his chains, and gave him the key of the prison. He departed, and took the road to Trevoux, in order to fulfil his vow. He had not gone far when he met the enemy. He again had recourse to his liberatrix. She took him by the hand, led and accompanied him to the gates of Trevoux. Jerome left his fetters at the foot of the altar, and giving himself up thenceforth to a holy life, he merited to be placed by the Church amongst the number of the blessed.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Bridget.)

Make all possible efforts to increase the number of the servants of Mary; that practice is infinitely pleasing to her, for she herself recommended it to Saint Bridget, saying: "See that thou makest thy children be also mine." This applies specially to little children who must be nourished with the milk of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Ephrem.)

O Virgin most pure, and wholly unspotted, O Mary, Mother of God, Queen of the universe, thou art above all the saints, the hope of the elect, and the joy of all the blessed. It is thou who hast reconciled us with God; thou art the only refuge of sinners and the safe harbor of those who are shipwrecked; thou art the consolation of the world, the ransom of captives, the health of the weak, the joy of the afflicted, and the salvation of all. We have recourse to thee, and we beseech thee to have pity upon us. Amen.

TWENTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR WHIT-SUNDAY.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE EXTENT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S GOODNESS TO ALL THOSE WHO APPLY TO HER IN THEIR NECESSITIES.

"Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee."—*Isaiah*, chap. xlix.

THE most necessary quality of a person in whom we would place confidence, and from whom we expect assistance, is, undoubtedly, goodness. Has the Blessed Virgin enough of it to be willing to assist us? We have seen that she has the power. Now, we are bound to believe that her goodness is as deeply engraved on the hearts of the faithful as her power. But to form a

solid judgment of the goodness of that Divine Mother, let us establish some principles that may serve us as certain and invariable rules.

It is certain, in the first place, that God has communicated to Mary all perfection in a degree so eminent that she surpasses all other creatures. It follows from this first principle, that the Blessed Virgin has more goodness than all men—than all saints—than all angels. Secondly, it is no less certain that God, in creating Mary, made her, among pure creatures, the most perfect image of the Divinity. Now, amongst all the divine perfections, goodness, mercy, is that which shines the most. According to that oracle of the prophet, “His mercy is over all his works.” That perfection ought, then, to shine proportionately amongst the perfections of Mary, and surpass all the others. For the third principle, as indubitable as the two former, the Blessed Virgin is a perfect copy of Jesus Christ, her Son, and there never was any thing so like and so conformable to each other as those two hearts of the Mother and the Son. Now, the characteristic of the Son was *goodness* and *mercy* for sinners, whom he came to redeem; that is no less certainly the characteristic of Mary. Finally, it must not be forgotten that God, in forming Mary, destined her to be the *Mother of the faithful*; so he gave her a mother’s heart for them. He destined her to be their advocate; their mediatrix; their refuge; their consolation. All this required that he should give her an infinite inclination to mercy.

These are certain principles on which to form a solid judgment of the goodness of Mary; and there is in the heart of the faithful a proof of feeling stronger than all possible reasoning. This is a voice sweeter, more per-

suasive, than that of any discourse : it is in the heart that this sentiment is engraved—this secret conviction of the mercy of Mary. We have been inspired with it from the cradle by our Christian parents, who have taught us to regard her as a Mother; to call her by that sweet name—by that name that corresponds so well with the titles which the Church gives her to excite our confidence. Are you some great sinner, and do you doubt that the mercy of Mary extends itself to you? Ah ! my brother, whomsoever you be, however great a sinner you may be, if you sincerely desire to return to God, go to Mary; doubt not that her goodness extends to you; she will lovingly receive you; and it is perhaps the only resource that remains to you—the only means that God leaves you to return into the way of salvation.

But is there any need to seek for proofs of Mary's mercy for sinners, whilst the universal Church will have us regard her as their refuge—the *refuge of sinners*? Ah ! how well adapted is that title which the Church gives to Mary to make us conceive a great idea alike of her goodness and her power! Therein the Church alludes to those asylums in which criminals find safety from the pursuit of human justice. If they are fortunate enough to find an asylum there, they can neither be captured nor punished through respect for the place that shelters them, or the powerful personages whose assistance they implore. Mary, according to the sentiment of the Church, is one of those asylums, wherein poor sinners can take refuge, when they desire to return into favor with God, and there they are in safety from divine justice—screened from the arrows of God's wrath. By how many examples might we not justify these sentiments, so glorious to the Mother of God, and so consoling to

men ! How many illustrious penitents might we not cite who have found their salvation in that asylum, and who owe the pardon of their crimes to the all-powerful prayers of Mary ! I call all converted sinners to bear testimony of the fact ; and, with Saint Bernard, I defy the world to produce one individual who has had recourse to Mary without having felt the effects of her protection. There have been abominable sinners, souls made over to the devil, who, almost despairing at sight of the enormity of their crimes, have only drawn themselves back from the precipice in the hope that the Blessed Virgin would take pity on them, and intercede for them. They looked upon her as the only resource which remained to them ; and their confidence was not in vain. Mary, touched with compassion, received them kindly, and obtained for them the pardon they solicited. There are surprising accounts of sinners whom Mary snatched from the very gates of hell ; and those accounts, written by the gravest authors, are so many striking proofs of the goodness of that divine Mother, and the power that she has in heaven.

EXAMPLE.

Mary's Succor to the Distressed begins precisely where human Resources fail.

It is related, in the Life of Sister Catherine of Saint Augustine, that, in the place inhabited by that servant of God, there dwelt a woman called Mary, who, from her earliest youth up, had led a very disorderly life. Age did not improve her, so that the people of the place, weary of her excesses, at length drove her from the town, and she had to take shelter in a cave in the adjoining country. There it was that, eaten away by a fright-

ful disease, which caused her flesh to fall from her bones, she soon died, without the Sacraments, and destitute of all human aid. Such a death did not seem to merit the honor of a Christian burial; so nothing more was done to the poor woman's body than to bury it in the fields, like that of a dog.

Sister Catherine had the pious custom of specially recommending to God those persons of her acquaintance who passed to another life; but she did not think of the aged sinner, like every one else, believing her damned. The woman had been dead about four years, when, one day, the servant of God being in prayer, a soul from purgatory appeared to her, and said: "Sister Catherine, how unfortunate I am! You pray for all those who die; yet, for my poor soul you have no compassion!" "And who are you?" inquired the servant of God. "I am," replied the soul from purgatory, "that poor Mary who died in the cave." "What! and you are saved?" replied Catherine, in astonishment. "Yes, I am, by the mercy of the Blessed Virgin. In my last moments, abandoned by every one, and seeing myself defiled with sin, I addressed myself to the Mother of God; and I said to her, from the bottom of my heart: 'Oh, thou the refuge of all who are deserted, have pity on me. I am deserted by every one; thou art my only hope. Come to my assistance!' I did not pray in vain. It is to the intercession of Mary that I owe my escape from hell, by an act of true contrition. Our Lady has, also, obtained for me the grace that my punishment shall be abridged. Divine justice causing me to suffer in intensity what I should have suffered in duration, a few masses only are requisite to deliver me from purgatory. Have them said for me, and I promise you that, once in heaven, I will

not cease to pray for you to God and his most holy Mother."

Sister Catherine had the masses celebrated; and some time after, that soul, brilliant as the sun, appeared again to her, and testifying her gratitude, "Heaven is at last open to me," said she. "I go thither to celebrate the mercy of my God; and be assured that I will not forget you." (*Life of Sister Catherine of Saint Augustine.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Alexis.)

Have a particular affection for the holy virtue of chastity, for the Blessed Virgin's sake. It was from that particular motive of pleasing Mary, that Saint Alexis, Saint Edward, and Saint Elzear, obtained so many favors of her.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint John Damascene.)

Hail, Mary, hope of Christians! hear the supplication of a sinner who loves thee tenderly; who honors thee particularly, and who places in thee the hope of his salvation. I owe thee life. Thou dost re-establish me in the grace of thy divine Son. Thou art the sure pledge of my eternal happiness. I intreat thee to deliver me from the burden of my sins. Dissipate the darkness of my mind, destroy the earthly affections of my heart, repulse the temptations of mine enemies, and preside over all the actions of my life, so that by thy direction I may arrive at the eternal felicity of Paradise. Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR WHIT-MONDAY.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE FIRST CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE BLESSED VIRGIN.—IT SHOULD BE UNIVERSAL.

“ She has delivered them from all their troubles.”—*Psalm xxxiii.*

LET us premise that the first characteristic of confidence in Mary is, that it should be universal,—that is to say, that recourse should be had to the Blessed Virgin at all times, in all places, in all necessities, whether spiritual or temporal, for the soul or for the body, for this life or the other, for ourselves, for our relatives, for our friends. And why? Because Mary’s power extends to all, to all times, to all places, to all wants, to all sorts of persons. “ Who can measure,” exclaims Saint Bernard, “ the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of Mary’s mercy!” Its length extends to all ages, its breadth embraces the entire universe, its height reaches even to heaven, and its depth extends even to the abyss. There is the rule for the extent of our confidence. Such has been that of all the Saints in the power and goodness of Mary, as we perceive by their sentiments; and such, especially, is that of the Church, which ought to be a consolation for us.

The Church, whose conduct ever holy, ever conformable to the spirit of Jesus Christ, ought to be an infallible rule for ours, so thoroughly recognizes in Mary that universal power and goodness, that she has herself recourse to that divine advocate in all her necessities,

and for all her children. She claims her aid for all. "Holy Mary," she exclaims, "succor the wretched, assist the weak, console the afflicted, pray for the people, assist the clergy, intercede for the devout female sex, that all who invoke thee may feel the effects of thy protection." I hear that holy Church ask of Mary deliverance from all evils, and from all dangers. "We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God," the Church exclaims; "despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all danger, O glorious and ever-blessed Virgin!" If one were to go over in this place all the prayers which the Church addresses to Mary, all the anthems, all the hymns of the Missal and the divine Office, and all that she puts in the mouths of the faithful, this universal confidence would be everywhere remarked.

The Church invokes the Blessed Virgin, and exclaims: "Break our bonds; relieve us from the blindness of sin; deliver us; ask for us all good things!" She asks of her innocence and final perseverance, the possession of God, life eternal. And remark that she asks these graces from Mary in a very different manner from that which she uses in regard to others; for she asks them of her as of one who is their dispenser—as one who has them in her hands. With regard to other saints, the Church commonly makes use of the words, pray for us; intercede for us: but, in addressing Mary, she often says to her, in an absolute manner, give us; grant us; deliver us; save us; have pity upon us; exert the maternal power that thou hast received from Jesus Christ, and cause that divine Son, who has deigned to belong to thee as such, to receive, through thee, our prayers.

This universal power of the Blessed Virgin is so well recognized in the Church, that there is no kind of grace

that is not asked of her, and for which she is not applied to, as the source from which grace flows. Throughout all the provinces of Christianity, the Church honors her under all the titles that can animate the confidence of her children. Thus she calls her, in one place, *Our Lady of Comfort*; and under that title, she is honored in various churches or chapels which bear that name,—that is, for those who are afflicted. In other places she is honored under the name of *Our Lady of Mercy*, for those who are overwhelmed with miseries of mind and body. Here she is honored under the title of *Our Lady of Hope*, against despair: there, under the name of *Our Lady of Grace*, against temptations and sin; of *Our Lady of Refuge*, against the persecutions of our enemies, visible and invisible; of *Our Lady of Peace*, against strife and discord; of *Our Lady of Light*, against the darkness of ignorance and error; of *Our Lady of Succor*, against the desertion of creatures; of *Our Lady of Healing*, against corporal and spiritual diseases; of our *Lady of the Agonizing*, for a good death; of *Our Lady the Deliverer*, against the captivity of sin and the tyranny of men; of *Our Lady of Victory*, for Christian armies; of *Our Lady of Good Meeting*, or *Our Lady of all Power*, to mark her power. So with other names given to Mary, all calculated to excite the confidence of the people, by making them feel there is in the Church the unlimited power that Jesus Christ has given to his divine Mother.

Hence arises that universal ardor for having recourse to the Blessed Virgin. In all ages, in all conditions, in all countries where the Christian religion is known, amongst men and women, the great and the lowly, the just and sinners, kings and subjects, priests and laity, religious and seculars, how many true servants of Mary,

of both sexes and of all states, who are specially devoted to that divine Mother, and who make it a duty to bear about them some mark of their devotion—rosary, scapular, chaplet, medal, image, &c., &c.? What priest or pastor who does not make it a duty to exhort his hearers to place themselves under the protection of Mary? What religious body of men or of women that does not regard Mary as its mother, its foundress? The Church calls her the help of the Christians. In danger, by land or sea, who is invoked with more earnestness, more affection, more ardor, than Mary? In the public calamities of war, of pestilence, of famine, to whom more than to Mary is recourse had, in order to avert those scourges of divine justice? Where is the nation, the province, the city, which does not, in those sad circumstances, solemnly vow and consecrate itself to Mary? The confidence in that powerful mediatrix is so engraved in the hearts of all the faithful, that, by a spontaneous movement, we are accustomed to invoke God and the holy Virgin: “May God, holy Virgin, aid me, assist me.” There, then, is the first characteristic of confidence in Mary; it should be universal, and that characteristic is clearly marked by the conduct of the Church, and by the spirit so generally diffused amongst her children.

EXAMPLE.

Admirable Effects of Recourse to Mary in the most deplorable Situation.

In the year 1640, there was at Turin an obstinate heretic, who would not even be converted at the article of death, notwithstanding all that could be done by several priests, who had for eight days been attending him.

At length, one of them persuaded, nay, almost forced him to have recourse to Mary, making him pronounce these words: "Mother of Jesus, help me!" The heretic then awakening from a deep sleep, exclaimed, "I will die a Catholic." And, in fact, he was reconciled to the Church, and died two hours after. (*Glories of Mary.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Philip Neri.)

Appeal to the Blessed Virgin in temptation, to ask her aid, and do not even wait for the temptation to come, but prevent it by that recourse to her protection. This was the advice given by Saint Philip Neri to those who had contracted bad habits, and desired to get rid of them. I can here bear witness that, in the exercise of the holy ministry, I have often made use of this excellent practice, and have derived much fruit from it, as well as great consolation on the part of my penitents.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Andrew of Candia.)

O Mary, if I place my confidence in thee, I shall be saved; if I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear, for thy servants are armed with the weapons of salvation which God grants only to those whom he has predestined. O Mother of Mercy, appease thy divine Son! Whilst thou wert upon earth thou didst occupy only a small part of it; now that thou art raised to the highest heavens, every one regards thee as the common propitiation of all nations. By thine infinite charity, make me find favor in the eyes of my Saviour, thine adorable Son. Amen.

TWENTY-NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR TRINITY SUNDAY, BEING THE FIRST AFTER
PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE BLESSED VIRGIN.—IT OUGHT TO BE CONTINUAL.

“Blessed is the man that heareth me daily.”—*Prov.*, chap. viii.

It is not enough to have recourse to Mary from time to time; for instance, on her great festivals, in certain important actions, in certain pressing necessities: the confidence contained in true devotion to Mary should be practised on all occasions, every day, at all hours; because, on the one hand, our wants are continual, and, on the other, God takes pleasure in granting us his aid, in every emergency, through Mary; and there is what renders this same confidence continual, and what constitutes its second essential characteristic.

The Church, ever inspired by the Divine Spirit who is her guide, asks nothing of God for which she does not employ the mediation of Mary. In all masses, in all offices, in all ceremonies, in all prayers, everywhere and in all her wants, she invokes Mary. Open those books which are used at the sacrifices of our altars, and on what page will you fall where there is no mention made of Mary? Open, in like manner, the rituals, the pontificals, which serve for the most august and sacred functions—benedictions, consecrations, administration of sacraments—the name of Mary, the invocation of Mary, the

intercession of Mary is found everywhere! It seems that, as the eternal Father would have the Church ask nothing but through the merits of his Son, so the Son, too, would likewise have our prayers presented to him by the hands of his Mother. It is in this spirit that the Church begins all the hours of the divine Office by invoking Mary, and she ends them in like manner by an anthem which she sings in her honor. There is no Mass in which Mary is not regularly invoked several times; three times each day she warns the faithful, by the sound of the bell, to invoke Mary. In all sermons, to render the divine word more efficacious, she approves the universal custom of interrupting that divine word to invoke Mary; and all the months of the year are filled with different festivals of the Blessed Virgin, which renders her worship assiduous, her mediation and her invocation continual.

See, now, the care which the Church takes to inspire all her children, from the youngest to the oldest, with that spirit of confidence. Infants are no sooner able to speak, than, being taught to pronounce the name of *Jesus*, they are taught to pronounce that of *Mary*, and not to separate those two sacred names. As soon as they are able to pray, they are taught to say the *Hail Mary*. The Church is convinced that God will favorably receive a prayer that Mary will present to him. The faithful, who are in a condition to receive instruction, learn to know and to adore Jesus Christ, and to place their confidence in him as their God and their Saviour: they revere Mary as the *Mother of their God*, and, consequently, invoke her always as their mediatrix with him; in morning and evening prayers, at mass, at confession, at communion, in church, and at home, the name of Mary is found in

almost all that tends to sanctify the actions of the day and of life. The prayer-books, which are in the hands of the common faithful, are full of the praises of Mary; of prayers imploring her assistance, and of pious formulas for consecrating one's self to her service, and for inviting her protection. It is thus that the Church nourishes the devotion of the people; and God grant that novelty may not destroy those customs consecrated by the piety of our fathers!

Remark, further, the zeal of the Church to excite more and more the confidence of her children in Mary, by loading with her favors those who assiduously invoke her. How many confraternities are founded in honor of Mary! how many congregations and holy assemblies approved! how many graces granted—how many privileges—how many indulgences! Never does the Church appear more liberal than when there is a question of leading the faithful to honor and invoke Mary. Here, then, is the second characteristic of confidence in Mary: that confidence should be continual; and seeking still more to render it such, let us add to all that we have just said this fine passage from Saint Bernard:

“O man, whosoever you are, who feel that this life is more like a stormy sea on which we sail in the midst of tempests, than firm land upon which we may walk in safety, would you avoid shipwreck? Turn your eyes incessantly to Mary; constantly fix your gaze on that beneficent star that will serve you as a guide. If temptations, like so many winds, arise, if you find yourself in the midst of shoals and afflictions in danger of failing, look at the star, call upon Mary; if you are tossed about by the waves of pride, of ambition, of slander, of envy turn to the star, have recourse to Mary; if anger, i.

avarice, if voluptuousness, put your bark in danger of perishing, raise your eyes to Mary, ask assistance of Mary; if the enormity, the horror of your crimes disturb you—if, terrified by the judgments of God, your heart is filled with sadness, and you feel yourself ingulfed in a sea of doubt and despair, think of Mary; finally, in all dangers, in all difficulties, in the very worst extremities, think of Mary, invoke Mary; let her name be unceasingly in your mouth and in your heart.”

The Saint finishes with these words, which should be engraved on every heart, and which the Church has adopted with all those that have been inserted in the office of the Name of Mary: “In following Mary, you will not go astray; in praying to her, you will not lose the confidence of obtaining; if she sustain you, you cannot fall; if she protect you, you have nothing to fear; if she conduct you, the way will become easy to you; in fine, if she is favorable to you, you will happily arrive at the end of your voyage and the port of your salvation.”

EXAMPLE.

An impenitent Sinner softened.

The venerable Father Bernard, that holy priest, so celebrated in Paris, during the last century, for his charity towards prisoners and his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was attending to the gibbet a man condemned to be hung. The wretched man added to all his other crimes the most horrible blasphemies against God. Although he had already tired out the patience of all who had exhorted him, Father Bernard was not discouraged. He ascends the scaffold with him; he urges him with all possible zeal, and is about to embrace him, when the

furious criminal pushes him away, and with a kick throws him from the ladder to the pavement. Father Bernard, although wounded, fails not to raise himself up, falls on his knees, and begins to invoke his powerful mediatrix by his usual prayer: *Memorare, O piissima, &c.* Admirable effect of Mary's protection ! The prayer was no sooner ended, than the criminal was seen to burst into tears of repentance, was converted, asked pardon, confessed, and edified as much by his repentance as he had horrified by his obstinacy.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Anthony of Padua.)

Select one day in each week, or at least in each month, to do something with the view of particularly honoring the Blessed Virgin, each according to your piety and your position. Saint Anthony of Padua reserved for that day the action which, in the exercise of his holy ministry, might procure the greatest glory to God.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint John Damascene.)

O Virgin, treasure of sanctity, fountain of justice, living and animated heaven, abyss and ocean of graces, deign, thou, who art the hope of Christians, the Queen of angels, the mistress of all creatures, to make us partakers of the happiness and glory which thou enjoyest in the heaven wherein thou art raised even to the throne of thy divine Son. Amen.

THIRTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FÊTE-DIEU ; OR, FEAST OF THE BLESSED
SACRAMENT.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE THIRD AND LAST CHARACTERISTIC OF
OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE BLESSED VIRGIN ;—IT SHOULD BE
TENDER AND AFFECTIONATE.

“ Draw me : we will run after thee, to the odor of thy ointments.—
Cant., chap. i.

THE third and last characteristic which our confidence in Mary should have, and which perfects the two others, is ardor, affection, and tenderness. Yes, our confidence should be ardent, as befits our wants and our need of being assisted ; sweet and affectionate, as becomes the characteristic goodness of her whom we invoke.

Let us never tire, then, of proposing the example of the Church. It is truly admirable, for nothing can be added to the ardor, the sweetness, and the tenderness she infuses into the prayers she addresses to Mary, and the practices she consecrates to her honor.

You have but to cast a glance, in fact, over that holy Church, spread throughout the world ; everywhere you will remark that tenderness of love towards Mary, that general ardor in all that concerns her worship. What feasts are celebrated with more attendance, with more devotion, more fervor, than those of Mary ? (We except all that relates to Jesus Christ.) What churches are more frequented than those which are dedicated to Mary ? What confraternities more multiplied and more numerous than hers ? What praises are more willingly

heard from the sacred pulpit than those of Mary? What sanctuaries more celebrated for their crowds of pilgrims than those which are consecrated to her, and which, by a special providence of God, are found scattered among the nations in all the provinces of the Christian world? What images of devotion more common and more honored than those of Mary, not only in the churches where she is on almost every altar, but also in private houses? Who has not in his house, or in his chamber, or in his oratory, some image of the Blessed Virgin? That sacred image is seen, in many countries of the world, in the public squares—on the gates of buildings—at the entrance of cities—and along the high roads. Everywhere it presents itself to the eyes of the faithful as the most tender object of their confidence and of their love.

What name, after that of Jesus, have the faithful on their lips and in their hearts? It is that of Mary. These two sacred names—Jesus, Mary—are not separated; they are always in our mouth during life; and, at our death, in adversity and prosperity, in temptations and in dangers, those divine names are as a precious balm for the relief of every ill. They are a remedy against the diseases of the soul, a formidable weapon against the enemies of our salvation.

But is it not to be feared that this confidence in Mary, which we would inspire,—a confidence so universal, so continual, so tender,—may weaken the confidence we ought to have in Jesus Christ? To answer this question, of which heretics have made use to surprise simple souls and destroy the devotion to Mary, let us appeal to Jesus Christ himself. Speak, adorable Saviour of men,—we are here going to ask thine own testimony on a subject which interests thy heart, and the object of thy

tenderest love,—speak thyself, O Lord, and teach us whether the sentiments we endeavor to excite towards thy divine Mother are in conformity with thy desires, and with thy will. Is it not thou thyself who dost animate our confidence, by the prodigies which thou never ceasest to operate in favor of those who invoke her? Hast thou not filled the world with miracles wrought by her intercession? Thy cross is our testimony, thou hast made it heard in all parts of the earth! Thou art not satisfied with publishing, by thy servants and by thy Church, the goodness of thy Mother to men, and the power thou hast communicated to her to succor them; but, by acting powerfully thyself, and taking men where they are most sensitive, and most effectually to be influenced, thou hast granted the greatest graces, both spiritual and temporal, to all those who have invoked the holy name of Mary. Let us go over all times and all ages—from the birth of Christianity—all places, all kingdoms, all provinces, all cities where there are or have been Christians, what clime can be found so wild or so remote as not to have some sanctuary consecrated to Mary, and celebrated for the miracles done there by her intercession? How many sick cured!—how many possessed persons delivered from evil spirits!—how many dead restored to life!—how many tempests stilled!—how many shipwrecks averted!—how many victories gained!—how many wars ended!—how many calamities and scourges of divine justice turned aside! And as to spiritual graces, what sinners converted!—what heresies extirpated!—what temptations overcome!—how many graces obtained! The sacred monuments with which the piety and gratitude of generations has enriched and filled her shrines, are they

not faithful witnesses of these marvellous effects of the all-powerful protection of Mary? During how many centuries has not God worked wonders in all the countries of the earth, in favor of those who have recourse to Mary! God has worked an infinity of miracles for the establishment of his Church, and how many has he not worked for the establishment of the worship of Mary? Can we doubt whether our confidence in that divine Mother is agreeable to him?

Let us terminate this article by a fine passage from Saint Bernard, exhorting the faithful of his time to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin. "Ah, my brethren!" cried that holy doctor, after speaking of the greatness and the mercy of Mary—"ah! my brethren, let us go to Mary! Let us have recourse to her with all the tenderness of our hearts, with all the extent of our desires, with all the ardor of which we are capable." These English words can convey no idea of the force of the Latin terms: "*Totis ergo medullis cordium, totis præcordiorum affectibus ac votis omnibus Mariam veneremur.*" What vivacity, what tenderness, what ardor in these expressions! He will have our hearts, even to their most secret feelings, penetrated with confidence in Mary—*Totis medullis cordium, totis præcordiorum affectibus.* Let your whole interior be moved. Let those be our most ardent wishes—*ac votis omnibus.* But why have recourse thus eagerly and ardently to Mary? Hear the reason given by that Saint, specially enlightened on the greatness and the privileges of the Virgin. "It is," says he, "because such is the will of God, who ordains that we shall receive all through the hands of Mary."

EXAMPLE.

Tenderness of Mary for those who love her with a true Affection.

Saint Stanislaus Kostka, one of the most faithful servants of Mary, heard on the first day of August a sermon by Father Peter Canisius, in which he urged all the novices of the Company so to act every day as though it were the last of their life. After the sermon, Stanislaus said to his companions, that that advice was the voice of God for him, because he was to die during the course of that month; and he told it, either because God expressly revealed it to him, or because he had some presentiment of what was going to happen. Four days after, Stanislaus, going with Father Emanuel to Saint Mary Major's, spoke of the approaching Feast of the Assumption. "Father," said the holy youth, "I believe that on that day heaven itself must present new charms, as it will display the glory of Mary crowned Queen of heaven, placed very near the Lord, above all the choirs of angels. And if it be true, as I believe, that the celebration of that day is renewed in heaven, I hope I shall see this next one there." On Saint Lawrence's day he received Holy Communion, and begged that Saint to present his petition to Mary, that he might, indeed, be a witness of that feast in heaven. At the close of that same day he had a fever, and, though it was but slight, he failed not to regard as certain the grace of approaching death. When taking to his bed he said, transported with joy, "I shall never rise from this bed;" and afterwards, speaking to Father Aquavina, he added: "Father, I believe Saint Lawrence has obtained for me, from Mary, the grace to be in heaven on the day of her

Assumption." The Father took no heed of these words. On the eve of that festival, Stanislaus felt a slight increase of his malady, and told a brother *that he should die on the following night*. The brother replied: "It would be a greater miracle to die of so slight an illness, than to be cured of it." But Stanislaus soon sank into a state of mortal weakness, and a cold sweat bedewed his whole body. The Superior hastened to see him, and Stanislaus begged that he might be laid upon the ground, so that he might die in penance. It was done accordingly. He confessed, and received the holy Viaticum with admirable piety. Extreme unction was then administered; and on the 15th of August, at daybreak, he expired without a struggle, his eyes fixed on heaven. It was only when they presented to him the image of the Blessed Virgin, and perceived his insensibility to it, that they knew he had passed into the life of the blessed. (*Life of the Saint.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Bernardine of Sienna.)

Honor the feasts of the Blessed Virgin by some action, the memory of which will last during the remainder of your life. Such was the practice of Saint Bernardine of Sienna, who, being born on a feast of the Blessed Virgin, would be ordained on the same day.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Andrew of Candia, or of Jerusalem.)

We beseech thee, holy Virgin, to give us the assistance of thy prayers with God,—prayers which are more dear and precious to us than all the treasures of the

earth,—prayers, which render God propitious to us, and obtain for us a great abundance of graces for receiving pardon of our sins, and for practising virtue,—prayers, which restrain our enemies, confound their designs, and triumph over all their endeavors. We implore their aid with the greatest confidence: deign to grant our request. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE LOVE DUE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“I love those who love me.”—*Prov.*, chap. viii.

THE third and most essential characteristic of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is the love we owe her. That love is the fruitful source of zeal for her glory, and of all the honors that are paid to her.

That love is one of the most precious gifts of grace. It is found in all the saints; it is one of the sweetest and surest marks of predestination. The grace which makes the predestined, inspires all the elect with that love. It is, as it were, an inseparable fruit of that grace, an effect which is natural to it. Mary was the Mother of the predestined; those who have the happiness to be of that number ought to feel for her that filial love. Those who do not feel that love for the Blessed Virgin, who have only coldness and indifference for her service, and contempt for established practices, have so

many marks of reprobation; for, as it is true that all the saints have loved Mary, so all the reprobate, who are regarded as such in the Church, have only regarded her with aversion.

But let us come to the explanation of that love due to the Blessed Virgin, and which ought to be a twofold love of esteem and preference, of sentiment and of tenderness: she merits it in the most eminent degree, after Jesus Christ, her adorable Son.

The love of esteem and of preference is founded on the perfections of the persons loved,—on their dignity—on their power—on their sanctity—on their wisdom—on their kindness, and their other qualities. The more eminent these perfections are, the more, also, the persons possessing them merit that love of preference and esteem in relation to all that is inferior to them. The love of sentiment and tenderness is founded upon the amiable qualities which naturally impress the heart of man, such as kindness, sweetness, clemency, liberality, &c. This love of sentiment is also founded upon certain connections or relations which are wont to unite hearts most closely, such as kindred or benefits. Thus a mother, a wife, a friend, a benefactor, is loved with a sensible affection. The more the amiable qualities are multiplied in the same person, the more the sensible love one is wont to bear that person usually grows. Just as the natural ties which unite us with some one become stronger and closer, the more lively and ardent are the sentiments of tenderness which they produce.

This love of feeling has divers degrees, as well as the love of esteem, and both may infinitely increase with the proportionate increase of the motives on which they are founded.

God is loved with that twofold love by the saints, even in this life, according as he deigns to manifest his perfections to them. The love of esteem and preference which he merits is commanded ; the sensible love is a gratuitous gift with which he favors souls when he pleases and as he pleases : but it is true that these favored souls sometimes experience for God a love of sentiment which produces in their hearts extraordinary effects of sweetness and tenderness, to which the most ardent profane love has nothing comparable. The Blessed Virgin should be loved with that twofold love of *esteem* and *tenderness*. And she never will be thus loved as much as she deserves to be ; because, on the one hand, her merits and her perfections surpass all understanding ; and, on the other, the qualities that she possesses, and the ties which unite us to her, are more capable of exciting and inflaming that sensible love. But, before explaining those various characteristics of the love that is due to the Blessed Virgin, let us exclaim, with Saint Ignatius the Martyr, and other children of Mary, " Love that adorable Mother as much as you will, she will always surpass you in tenderness." Love her, then, if it be possible, as much as a Saint Stanislaus Kotska, who could not speak of his love for her without communicating to his hearers the ardor of his own flame, who invented new names to honor her, who asked her blessing upon his every action, who prayed to her as though he was speaking to her face to face, who was transported out of himself by the singing of the *Salve Regina*, and who, when asked how he loved Mary, was wont to reply, " She is my mother, what can I say more ?" pronouncing those words with such emotion of both voice and countenance, that he seemed not a mortal, but

an angel come down from heaven to preach the love of Mary. Let us love her, as did the venerable Hermann, who called her his spouse of love ; as much as St. Bonaventure, who called her not only his Lady and his Mother, but his heart and his soul. "Hail," said he, to her, in his sentiments of love, "hail, my Lady, my Mother, my heart and my soul!" Let us love Mary as much as did Saint Bernard, who, inflamed with love for her, said to her: "Ravisher of hearts, have you not ravished mine from me?" As much as did Saint Bernardine of Sienna, who went every day to visit her before a pious picture, to express his love for her in tender colloquies, answering those who asked him whither he thus went every day, "I go to visit my beloved." Let us love her as did Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, whose heart throbbed and whose cheek glowed at the very name of Mary; or like Saint Francis Solano, who, in a holy delirium of love, seized a musical instrument, and went to sing before an image of Mary. Let us love her as did a Father Diego Martinez, who, in reward of his tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, merited on every feast of Mary to be carried by angels to heaven, to be witness of the pomp with which those festivals are celebrated by the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem; and who said: "Would that I had the hearts of all the angels and of all the saints, that I might love her as they love her." Finally, let us exhaust all the inventions of love: never shall we succeed in loving Mary as much as she deserves. But if we do not love her as she deserves, let us at least love her as much as we possibly can; with that love of esteem and tenderness which we owe her on so many accounts, and of which we shall speak in the two following exercises.

EXAMPLE.

The Love of Mary preferred to an Earthly Kingdom.

The brother of a king of Hungary daily recited the Office of Mary. During a dangerous illness, he made a vow of chastity, if he should recover his health; and he speedily did so. After the death of his brother, as he was on the point of marrying a young princess, and every thing was already prepared for the nuptials, he would recite the Office as usual. But on reaching the words, "how beautiful thou art," Mary appeared to him, and said: "If I am as you say, why forsake me for another? Know, that if you renounce this marriage, you shall have me for your Spouse, and you shall possess the kingdom of heaven instead of the kingdom of Hungary." The prince fled into a desert near Aquila, and died holily.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Charles Borromeo.)

Never let a day pass without reciting some particular prayer in honor of Mary, or reading some portion of her Office. Saint Charles Borromeo, occupied as he was, daily recited it on his knees. It is the most constant practice of souls truly devoted to Mary.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Anselm.)

O most glorious Virgin, may my heart ever burn, and my soul preserve itself for thee! My tender and divine Mother, since thou art all-powerful with God, grant that I may love thee as much as thou art amiable. Jesus

Christ, thine adorable Son, who loved men even unto the death of the cross, could he refuse me, under thine auspices, a favor so closely affecting his own glory, and which I ask so urgently? No, doubtless. Grant me, then, O Mary, that I may live only by thy love and the love of my God, to the end that I may one day be consumed by it, to go and live eternally in the celestial kingdom: Amen.

THIRTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE LOVE OF ESTEEM DUE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison with her."—*Wisdom*, chap. vii.

If the love of esteem is founded on the perfections of the person beloved, and should be in proportion to the excellence and the number of those perfections, to what a degree must that ascend which is due to the Blessed Virgin, since there is nothing amongst creatures, whether in number or in excellence, comparable to her perfections? Though you should unite together all the perfections of angels and men—though all these perfections should make but one—it may still be considered that even that one total perfection would not approach that of the Blessed Virgin. It is incomprehensible to the highest seraphim; and, consequently, the highest seraphim cannot love the Blessed Virgin with that love of

esteem as much as she deserves. It is God alone who knows her perfectly. Her merit effaces all the merits of the angels and saints, as the moon in her splendor effaces all the stars; and, consequently, the love of esteem due to her effaces all other love.

Those who fear that in using such language we may be in danger of confounding the greatness of the Son with that of the Mother, doubtless do not reflect, for an immense distance is left between the Mother and the Son. Who is ignorant that the perfections of the Son are infinite, and those of the Mother finite? There remains, then, an infinite distance between the Son and the Mother; so that there is no place for that species of equality which they would fain make us dread. The mind must be greatly prejudiced, and the heart very ill disposed, to form such difficulties. We should not be surprised to see them made by heretics, into whom the devil has breathed a part of his venom against that immaculate Virgin, but we should be very much surprised that Catholics could adopt them.

For the rest, when we attribute to the Blessed Virgin perfections which verge upon the infinite, those terms should not be taken literally. They are used to indicate a greatness and an excellence which surpass all that the human, and even all that the angelic mind can comprehend, and to make people feel that the difference of perfection between the Blessed Virgin and other creatures is so great, that, having no terms to explain it, we make use of the words *immense*, *incomprehensible*, *infinite*, well knowing that the faithful are not ignorant in what sense those expressions are to be taken, and the limits that are to be given them.

It is proper to make here an important reflection.

When we give to the Blessed Virgin perfections which surpass all the understanding of angels and of men, to whom does the principal glory revert? Is it to the Blessed Virgin, or to Jesus Christ her son? Was it the Blessed Virgin herself who made herself so holy, so wise, so powerful, so admirable, so amiable? or, was it her Son who made her so? "All that is said in honor of the Mother," says Saint Bernard, "reflects back upon the Son. All the praises we give to the Mother belong to the Son." Arnaud of Chartres expresses the same thought still more strongly: "It is not enough, in speaking of the glory of the Son, to say that that glory is his in common with his Mother: we must say that it is the same." So, when we publish the glory of the Blessed Virgin, it is the very glory of God that we publish. The beauty of the work makes the glory of the workman. To diminish the glory of the Blessed Virgin, is to diminish the glory of her Author. The more ineffable is the glory of his holy Mother, the more the glory of God shines forth. All that is great in that Mother of the eternal Word comes to her from her Son. All that is great in that Spouse of the Holy Ghost comes to her from her divine Spouse; so that all the greatness we ascribe to the Blessed Virgin is to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who have been pleased to make of that Daughter, of that Mother, of that Spouse, an object worthy the admiration of heaven and earth. All the trouble some have made an account of the praises given to the Blessed Virgin, praises which appear to them excessive, comes from the little enlightenment they have as to the ineffable greatness of the Mother of the Creator.

God, who thought fit to make the holy humanity of Jesus Christ the masterpiece of power, of magnificence,

and of goodness, who exhausted his treasures to render that humanity united to the Word the incomprehensible object of the adoration and love of angels and men, also saw fit that the Mother of that adorable Son should participate in his infinite greatness in a manner worthy of such a Mother. He made her another masterpiece of his power, of his magnificence, of his goodness,—inferior, indeed, to even the created perfections of the Son,—but so far above all others, that we have no terms to express her excellence and her elevation.

Let us, then, conclude, for the rule of that love of esteem which is due to the Blessed Virgin, that she should be loved more than all creatures in heaven and on earth. She should be loved above all that is not God. She, alone, must be preferred to all angels and to all saints together. In a word, after her Son, she cannot be sufficiently loved with that love of esteem and preference.

O my God, deign to shed thy light upon this subject, and make known thyself the greatness and the excellence of that Virgin whom thou didst raise to the dignity of thy Mother. Our words will be always too weak to express any thing of that goodness!

EXAMPLE.

Admirable conduct of a young Nobleman in honor of Mary.

A young Genoese lord, being at sea, began to read an obscene book of which he was very fond. A monk said to him, "Should you wish to give something to the Blessed Virgin?" "Yes," replied the young man. "Well, then, for her sake, I would have you tear up that and throw it into the sea." "There it is, father; do what

you please with it." "No," replied the monk, "I would prefer that you should yourself make that sacrifice to Mary." Then, the young man himself threw the book into the sea, and when he had returned to Genoa, the Mother of God so touched his heart that he became a religious. Let us love Mary; let us prefer her to all that we hold most dear—to all that we most love. Our love and esteem for that divine and good Mother will not long remain unrewarded. (*Saint Alphon. de Liguori.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Gerard, first Bishop of Hungary.)

Make it a duty never to refuse any thing that is asked of you for the Blessed Virgin's sake, or in her name. Saint Gerard, or Geraud, first bishop and first martyr of Hungary, was so faithful to this practice, that he never once failed in it. In return for what we give, we may ask a "Hail Mary."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Proclus.)

Holy Virgin, Mother of God, succor those who implore thine assistance. Cast thine eyes upon us. Thou well knowest in what perils thou hast left us; and thou art not ignorant of the wretched condition to which thy servants are reduced. Thy great mercy will not lose sight of our profound misery. We love thee, and we place ourselves under thy protection. Be gracious then to us, so that we may succeed in seeing thee in heaven; for next to the glory of seeing God, that is the greatest we can enjoy. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE LOVE OF TENDERNESS AND AFFECTION
DUE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come ; show me thy face, thy face is comely.”—*Cant.*, chap. ii.

THE love of affection and tenderness is founded, on the one side, upon the qualities of the person beloved—qualities of which we have spoken in the preceding article with reference to the Blessed Virgin; and on the other side, that same love of affection and tenderness is founded on the ties and relations that bind us to them. It is of those ties which so closely unite us to Mary that we are about to speak, in this exercise; and the examination of them will convince us that nothing is more capable of exciting for her in our hearts love the sweetest, the tenderest, and the most lively,—such a love, in fact, as has been felt by so many saints, and is still felt by a multitude of just souls in the Church of Christ.

Speaking of beauty, in reference to the Blessed Virgin, we must lay aside all ideas of mortal and earthly beauty. Hers is a beauty all celestial, all angelic, all divine. It is a beauty like to that of the humanity of Jesus Christ, which will eternally delight the eyes and the hearts of the blessed, ravish them with admiration, and cause them to taste an ineffable tenderness and sweetness. The beauty of the Blessed Virgin is of the same nature, and will proportionately produce the same effects.

The Holy Ghost calls Mary “all fair.” She, in fact,

unites every kind of beauty,—the beauty of the body, the beauty of the soul, the beauty of all virtues, the beauty of all divine gifts; all the beauties of nature, all the beauties of grace, all the beauties of glory; beauties without spot and without defect; unchangeable beauties, incorruptible beauties, immortal beauties ravishing beauties, the most proper to charm all mind; and all hearts. The Holy Ghost also says of the Blessed Virgin, that “she is fair as the moon, and chosen as the sun,” to convey an idea by those comparisons of the excellence of that beauty before which all other beauty disappears, like the stars near the sun and the moon. To that incomparable beauty of the Queen of the universe must be added a uniform sweetness. That perfection of sweetness in a person already all-amiable, is infinitely proper to excite the tenderest love. Now, the Blessed Virgin eminently possesses this perfection, and it forms one of the most beautiful traits of her character. There never were hearts more alike to each other than those of Jesus and Mary. The heart of Jesus was the meekest of all hearts; the same must then be said, proportionately, of that of Mary. The meekness of all other hearts does not approach hers. Jesus Christ gave all his disciples this lesson: “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”

If that divine lesson was well learned by any one, it was doubtless by the Blessed Virgin, the perfect disciple of her Son, and who had had before her eyes during thirty-three years that divine model of sweetness and humility. So it cannot be doubted that she possessed that virtue in the highest degree of perfection. The Church specially attributes it to her, in the praises she gives her, calling her our sweetness and our life, Mother

of goodness and of mercy. "O Mary!" the Church exclaims, in the anthem which she sings at the close of the divine Office, the greater part of the year, "O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!" and in the vesper hymn of the Office of the Blessed Virgin, she exclaims: "O Virgin unequalled, who surpasses all creatures in sweetness!" She repeats that eulogium in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin: "Virgin most clement, Comfort of the afflicted!" That amiable quality of sweetness and of mercy is so proper to the Blessed Virgin, that when any one would picture to himself a perfect sweetness, he can conceive none more perfect than hers. Her whole sacred person, her looks, her actions, her demeanor, her mysteries, her entire life, breathe only sweetness, clemency, mercy. Her memory, her name, her images, bear that impression to every heart. We cannot utter her name, or look at her image, without feeling those sweet emotions. Her children experience them every day.

EXAMPLE.

The Shepherdess loaded with favors by Mary.

Father Auriemma relates the story of a poor shepherdess, who had a very tender affection for the Blessed Virgin. It was her whole happiness to retire to a little chapel of Our Lady, situated on the mountain-side, and whilst her flock grazed around, she remained for hours together in sweet communion with her good Mother. The statue of the holy Virgin was without any kind of ornament. The shepherdess made a cloak for it, from the best stuff she could find. Another time she gathered wild-flowers, of which she formed a wreath; then, ascending the altar of the chapel, she placed the wreath on the head of the statue. "My Mother," said

she then to Mary, "my Mother, would that I could place on thy head a crown of gold and precious stones; but as I am only a poor shepherdess, I can give thee only a crown of flowers. Accept it, at least, as a pledge of my love." It was by such simple homage that the young girl strove to honor her mistress. The Blessed Virgin knew how to reward her visits and her affection. The shepherdess fell sick, and was at the last extremity, when it happened that two monks, passing by that place, and fatigued with their journey, sat down under a tree to rest. One of them fell asleep, and the other remained awake, but both had the same vision. They saw a company of young virgins, all perfectly beautiful, one of whom, who was in the midst of the others, surpassed all her companions in beauty and majesty. One of the monks, addressing the latter, inquired who she was. "I am the Mother of God," she replied, "and I am going with my attendant virgins to visit a poor dying shepherdess, who, in her lifetime, often visited me;" and the vision disappeared. "Come, let us go see the shepherdess," said the monks. They set out, and God conducted them to her dwelling. They found her lying on a little straw. They saluted her. She returned their salutation, and said to them: "My brethren, pray to God that he may enable you to see in what company I am." Thereupon they knelt down, and the Lord having opened their eyes, they saw Mary with a crown in her hand, at the head of the dying girl's bed. All at once the Mother of God, and her attendant virgins, began to sing a hymn. At this celestial chant the soul of the shepherdess breaks its bonds. Mary receives her in her arms, places the crown upon her head, and carries her up to heaven. (*Father Auriemma.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Magdalen of Pazzi.)

Consecrate yourself every day to Mary, by some short prayer or aspiration. This practice is very agreeable to the Blessed Virgin, and advantageous to those who observe it. Saint Magdalen of Pazzi used to say, several times a day, "O Mary, I give myself entirely to thee! receive me and preserve me!"

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Methode.)

Thy name, O Mother of God, contains all divine graces and benedictions. Thou didst contain him who is incomprehensible, and nourish him by whom all is nourished. He who fills the heavens and the earth, who is the sovereign Lord of all things, deigned to be thy debtor, when thou gavest him that garment of flesh which before he had not. Rejoice, O Mother and servant of God! rejoice! thou hast for debtor him who giveth being to all creatures. We are all debtors to God, but God himself is thy debtor; therefore, blessed Mother, thy charity and thine influence with him surpass the charity and the influence of all other saints. We celebrate thy glory, we know how great is thy goodness, we pray thee to remember us and our miseries. Amen.

THIRTY-FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN US AND
THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Behold, we are bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh.”—*Second Book of Kings*, chap. iv.

How admirable, how sublime, are the ties which unite us with the Blessed Virgin! Never were there any closer or stronger. Mary is our mother, our mistress, our queen, our benefactress, our refuge, our hope, our life. Where else were united so many titles calculated to produce the tenderest love?

Mary is our Mother, and she is so by the will of her Son. Saint John represented us all at the foot of the cross, when Jesus Christ said to him that sweet word, “Behold thy Mother,” and when he said to Mary, “Behold thy Son!” That adorable Saviour, at that moment, gave all the children of the Church for children to the Blessed Virgin, and she adopted them with all her heart in the person of St. John. Moreover, Jesus Christ having adopted us all for his brethren, rendered us by that adoption the children of his own Mother. Now, that quality of Mother given to Mary by Jesus Christ cannot be a vain quality or name, void of reality; it produces in the heart of the Blessed Virgin all the feelings of a true mother. We may, therefore, count in all certainty on finding in the Blessed Virgin’s heart all maternal dispositions in our regard. Ah! how can a sensitive heart resist so many attractions? What sentiments of love and tenderness does she not merit from us?

To the quality of mother must be added that of benefactress, of refuge, of hope,—qualities so well known in the Church, and with which all her true children are penetrated. Souls illumined by divine light love the Blessed Virgin with inexpressible ardor and tenderness. No child so loves its mother, no servant has more zeal for the best of all mistresses, or more earnestly desires her glory, than the servants of Mary desire hers. Saint Bernard said that he knew no sweeter joy than to speak the praises of the Blessed Virgin; that the very name of Mary inflamed his heart; that that sacred name never occurred to his mind without producing therein a celestial joy. Saint Bonaventure felt the same tenderness of love, which is impressed upon every passage of his works in which he speaks of the Blessed Virgin, but especially in the psalter he composed in her honor, in which he combines, on the one side, every thing greatest and most sublime that can be said of the Blessed Virgin; and on the other, all that the most tender love can inspire. But nothing equals the tenderness of sentiment and heart-warm affection with which Saint Bernardine of Sienna explains himself with regard to Mary. Let us hear and admire his words: “God is my witness,” he exclaims, in his sweet transports, “that if it sometimes happens to me, by an effect of heavenly grace, that, disengaged and converted from exterior things, I can wholly occupy myself with the greatness of Mary, were it only for the space of an hour, I am penetrated with so sweet a joy, I swim in such great delight, that, trampling under foot all the vanities of this world, I would desire nothing more ardently, were it permitted me, than instantly to fly to God in that sweet transport, before the care of temporal things comes again to tear

me away from my feelings of joy, and to change my sweet sounds into sighs, and my singing into tears and lamentations. Imagine what must be the joy, the glory, of seeing Mary in the celestial country!—of contemplating her in the splendor of her greatness, surrounded by choirs of angels, placed on the throne of her dignity! What joy must there be in heaven, since, even in this valley of tears and this abode of misery, the mere remembrance of her name makes one taste such sweet joy and such pure delight?"

Thus spoke, thus thought the saints whom we have quoted. Those who preceded or followed them—Saint Dominick, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Theresa, Saint Magdalen of Pazzi, Saint Catherine of Sienna—and, generally, all the saints in all times and in all places, have been animated by the same sentiments.

EXAMPLE.

How acceptable to Mary are all those who enroll themselves in her Associations.

One of the practices of devotion most agreeable to the Blessed Virgin is, to enter and to persevere in those associations established in her honor, under the name of Confraternities. We may judge of this by the numberless favors she has bestowed upon those who have faithfully consecrated themselves to her service in those societies, and by the great souls who have hastened to enter into them. It was in these congregations that a great number of saints, such as Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Saint Stanislaus, &c., laid the foundations of the sanctity to which they attained under the protection of Mary. The most distinguished personages have also

been seen to enter therein. The princes of Lorraine have especially distinguished themselves in that manner. Francis the Second, Duke of Lorraine, to give the example to his subjects, and make public profession of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, would be one of the first received into the congregation erected at Nancy, in a house of the Society of Jesus. Charles the Fourth, and Leopold, inheriting the piety of their fathers, did themselves the honor of going to pay their homage to the Queen of Heaven in that same congregation. The infinite good that is seen to have been produced by these pious assemblies, causes them to be multiplied everywhere for persons of both sexes; and those who faithfully and humbly discharge their duties in them, cannot fail to experience still, upon occasion, the powerful protection of the august Mother of God.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By King Louis the Good.)

Revere the images of Mary; carry one about you; or, at least, have one in your chamber. King Louis the Good had always about him an image of the Blessed Virgin, and it often happened that when out hunting, whilst those who accompanied him were at their sport, he knelt and prayed before that image. It is matter of history how profitable that pious practice proved to him on many occasions.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Ephrem.)

O Mother of God, protect us, preserve us under the wings of thy piety and thy mercy! All our confidence

is in thee. From our earliest infancy we have consecrated ourselves to thee as our Sovereign. Thou art the port wherein we take shelter. O spotless Virgin, we are devoted to thee forever. Amen.

THIRTY-FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE CO-OPERATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS NECESSARY TO WORK OUT OUR SALVATION.

"Our life is in thy hand."—*Gen.*, chap. xlvii.

MARY has done so much for our sanctification, that we should be guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards her if we had not the greatest veneration, and, at the same time, the most profound gratitude for her august title of co-redemptrix of mankind. We owe her these sentiments, for she has co-operated in our salvation in three ways (according to the celebrated Father Suarez): 1st, by meriting with a merit of *congruity*, as the theologians say, that the divine Word should be made flesh in her womb; 2d, by the fervent prayers which she continually addresses to God for us; 3d, and finally, by the sacrifice of the life of her Son, whom she consented to see immolated on Calvary for our redemption. Wherefore it is that the Lord, always just in his decrees, has willed that Mary—who, with so much love for men, and so much zeal for the glory of God, has contributed to the sanctification of the human race—should become for all the children of Adam the mediatrix of their salvation.

Saint Bernard, so zealous for the glory of Mary whose illustrious prerogatives he exalts, extending by every possible means the domain of her power, tells us that "all men who have ever been, and who ever will be to the end of the world, ought to regard the Blessed Virgin as the instrument of which God made use to effect our salvation." In like manner Jesus Christ tells us in his Gospel, that "no one can come to him unless his heavenly Father attracts him by his grace." So Richard, of Saint Lawrence, makes him say of Mary: "None can come to me unless drawn to me by the prayers of my mother;" and he adds: "Jesus is the Son of Mary, as we say every day in the *Angelical Salutation*; he, then, who desires to have that fruit must necessarily go to the tree that bears it. No, it is certain that the Son cannot be found except through the Mother and with the Mother."

The evangelist Saint Luke, in giving us the details of Mary's visit to her cousin, tells us, that "when Saint Elizabeth saw the Blessed Virgin enter her house, she was transported with joy, and, in her humility, exclaimed: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my God should come to visit me?" But why did she not say, as would seem more reasonable, that she is unworthy to receive the visit of her God himself, rather than that of his Mother; ah! the answer is easy; it is, that Saint Elizabeth perfectly well knew, being enlightened at that moment by the Holy Ghost, with whom she was filled, that Mary coming to see her, and coming with her divine Son, it was sufficient for her to thank the Mother, being, moreover, unwilling, doubtless from her humility, to name the Saviour himself, whose presence had such happy effects upon herself and upon the child that she carried in her womb. The Church applies to Mary those

words of Wisdom: "She is like the merchant's ship: she bringeth her bread from afar." (*Prov.*, chap. xxxi.)

Yes; Mary is that privileged vessel which bears our nourishment, our bread descended from heaven, even Jesus Christ, as he himself declares in his Gospel. Thus all those who know not how to board that precious vessel will not be able to nourish themselves with the celestial food wherewith it is laden, and which gives eternal life. All those who are not protected by Mary, the ark of the New Covenant, shall inevitably perish in the waters of that deluge of iniquity by which this vale of tears is overspread, and from which we shall only be sheltered under the saving wings of the divine Mary. She is the health of the weak, exclaims the Church; and we who are full of spiritual infirmities, let us then invoke Mary, and say to her, as Saint Peter said to Jesus Christ, "Save us, we perish." God has established her as treasurer of his goods, and when we address ourselves to him, he says, as Pharaoh said to the Egyptians when they came to ask him for bread, "Go to Joseph." Even as a stone, when the soil that has supported it comes to fail, rolls from depth to depth, so a soul that loses the support of Mary falls immediately into sin, and then into hell. According to Saint Bonaventure, "God will not save us without the co-operation of Mary." "How will it then be with us here," exclaims Saint Germain, "if thou dost abandon us; and what shall be our hope if thou ceaseest to assist us, O Mary, thou who art the life of Christians?"

But if all graces pass through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, and "if the salvation of all men," as Cassian affirms, "is in the protection and in the co-operation of Mary," it follows, some will object, that when we pray to

the saints to intercede for us, they must themselves have recourse to the Blessed Virgin, that she may employ her mediation with God in presenting their prayers to him. It may be replied, in the first place, that it is quite natural for subjects to apply to their queen, and is not Mary Queen of all Saints, as the Church sings, *Regina Sanctorum omnium*? It is easy to conceive that the blessed in heaven have recourse to the intercession of Mary, more efficacious with God than their own, to obtain from him the graces they solicit in behalf of those who claim their suffrages.

But here is something more satisfactory than the expression of our own thought. The royal Psalmist says: "All the rich among the people shall entreat thy countenance." (*Ps. xlv.*)

The Church applies these words to the Blessed Virgin. Now, the great, the rich, among the people of God, according to the interpretation of that passage by the learned Father Suarez, are the Saints. "Hence," says he, "we ought to pray to the powerful in the heavenly Jerusalem, to be our intercessors with her who is their Mistress and their Sovereign." Father Marchese relates, in his *Journal of Mary*, that Saint Frances, a Roman lady, having invoked Saint Benedict, for whom she had a great devotion, the saint appeared to her, and promised to intercede for her with the Blessed Virgin.

Convinced of the necessity of the Blessed Virgin's co-operation to work out our salvation, let us never cease to ask it of her. Let us always address ourselves to her, saying, with several of her devout servants: "O Mary, Mediatrix of our salvation, Virgin full of grace, ladder of Jacob, gate of heaven, help of all Christians, treasurer of celestial goods, may all men honor thee with their whole heart, and with their whole soul!"

EXAMPLE.

Admirable change effected by devotion to Mary.

The venerable Mother Victoria Fornari was exerting herself to the utmost to form her Institute of the heavenly Annunciation, intended to honor, principally, the hidden life of Jesus and Mary, when that pious enterprise all at once failed. The person who was its chief support had taken other views, and had drawn away some of Victoria's companions. As soon as she knew it, she went to throw herself at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, and conjured her to protect her infant congregation, which would be dispersed if she did not take care of it. Then the Mother of God, desirous of consoling her humble servant, spoke to her thus: "Victoria, what dost thou fear? This monastery is mine. It is my work, and I will take care of it. Doubt not of its success." The effect could not follow more closely on the promise. Only a few moments had passed, before Mary manifested the power which her Son gives her over hearts. Those of the persons who had been opposed to Victoria's work, entirely changed. Her companions came immediately to testify to her their regret for having entertained opposite sentiments from hers, and their firm resolution to persevere faithfully in the part which they now again took, consecrating themselves to the Blessed Virgin, in the Institute of the Annunciation. They did so, in fact; and, thenceforth, that pious establishment, which edifies the Church by the most perfect separation from the world, was seen to acquire fresh strength and vigor. (*Life of the Venerable Mother Victoria Fornari.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Venerable Berchmans.)

Acquire the habit of never being in company without speaking of Mary, her prerogatives, and the need we have of her assistance to obtain the graces of heaven. Make it your duty to say that you love her. It was to this devotion that the venerable Berchmans attributed all the favors he had received from God, as he declared to one of his fellow disciples on the evening before his death.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Alphonso Liguori.)

O Mother of God, thou art the hope of men! The price of my salvation is already paid. My Saviour has given all his blood, one drop of which would alone suffice to ransom millions of worlds; it now only remains for me to apply to myself the precious merits of that blood. It is to thee, holy Virgin, that I confide my soul, so that the enemy may not deprive me of it. Amen.

THIRTY-SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: GOD ONLY GRANTS HIS GRACES TO MEN THROUGH THE INTERMEDIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue."—*Eccclus.*, chap. xxiv.

In advancing this proposition, that all the graces of God are given to us by the intercession or intermediation

of Mary, and textually taken from the writings of Saint Bernard, many other saints, and a great number of doctors, we recognize for certain that Jesus Christ is the sole Mediator between God and men, whom he has reconciled with his heavenly Father by his infinite merits. But we also recognize that this divine Saviour, to honor his holy Mother, has willed that she should be the Mediatrix between himself and us. And we establish that truth, so glorious to Mary and so consoling to us poor sinners, by the words of the saints. Saint Thomas says, in his eighth letter, that "the Saints, in proportion to the merits that procured them grace, can obtain the salvation of many, but that our Redeemer and his Mother have merited so many graces, that they can save all." He adds, that, "Mary being the universal advocate of all men, all those who are saved obtain their salvation by means of her. And, furthermore, even as Mary has co-operated by her charity, as Saint Augustine says, in the spiritual birth of the faithful, it is the will of God that she also contribute, by her intercession, in obtaining for them the life of grace in this world and the life of glory in eternity. Wherefore it is that the Church makes us call her, without restriction, our life and our hope."

Saint Bernard says, that "Mary has received from God the plenitude;" he subsequently explains what that plenitude is, and he principally observes that "Mary has received that plenitude, because she received within herself Jesus Christ, the source of every grace." But he adds, that, "consequently, the Blessed Virgin has received another plenitude, which is the plenitude of graces, that she may herself dispense them to all men in her quality of their mediatrix with God." "What fear," says he, in his homily for the Sunday within the Octave

of the Assumption, "could frail man have in presenting himself before Mary? Her aspect has nothing terrible, nor even austere. She is sweet and kind towards all; she refuses nothing; she is even the first to offer to all men the milk of mercy and the wool of intercession? Return thanks to Him who has procured us such a mediatrix. She made herself *all to us*, and by her immense charity she has made herself the debtor alike of the wise and the foolish; she opens to us the bosom of her mercy, in order that all without exception may receive of her plenitude; that by it the captive should be ransomed, the sick cured, the sinner justified, the just sanctified, the angel beatified, the Word receive flesh, and that none should escape from the ardor of her charity."

To feel the force of this passage, and especially that of the expression, "that all may receive of her plenitude," it must be remarked that Saint Bernard speaks here not of the first plenitude, which is Jesus Christ—for then he could not have said that the Word received flesh therefrom—but that he speaks of the second plenitude, of that which Mary received from God, to dispense to each of us the graces which are granted to us. That other expression is also to be noticed, "that no one may secrete himself from the ardor of her charity;" for, if any one received graces by any other medium than that of Mary, it would follow that such person could be sheltered from the ardor of that sun: but that is not what Saint Bernard says, or meant to say; he afterwards adds those remarkable and very significant words, addressing himself to Mary, "thou who hast received grace, O Mother of salvation, it is through thee that we have access to thy Son, and meet a favorable reception from him who by thee was given to us."

The saint here meant to tell us plainly, that, as we have access to the eternal Father only by his Son Jesus Christ, who by his merits obtains all graces for us, in like manner we have access to that divine Son only through the medium of his holy Mother, who is mediatrix of grace, and who by means of her prayers obtains for us all the graces which Jesus Christ has merited for us.

It would be necessary to copy the greater part of Saint Bernard's discourses, in order to have any adequate idea of all that he has said upon the mediation of Mary; for now he exhorts us to recommend ourselves to her, and to take her for our advocate with Jesus Christ; now he tells us that if she will vouchsafe to pray for us, her Son will most certainly hear her prayers. "Have recourse to Mary," he exclaims, "and be sure that her intercession will not be vain; her Son, who knows her, will hear her, and the Father will hear the Son. My dear children," he adds, "Mary is the ladder of sinners; she is my greatest confidence, and the whole foundation of my hope." He calls her the *ladder*, because, even as we cannot reach the third round of a ladder till after we have stepped on the second, or reach the second until we have rested on the first, in like manner we cannot reach God but by means of Jesus Christ, and we can only reach Jesus Christ by the means of Mary." He also calls her his greatest confidence, and the whole foundation of his hope, because all graces pass through the hands of Mary, and he would believe himself deprived of grace and of hope if he were deprived of her intercession.

But it is not Saint Bernard alone who holds such language. I might here cite Saint Jerome, and Saint Ber

nardine of Sienna, who say, that "no creature obtains any grace from God but in receiving it from the hands of his merciful Mother." Saint Bonaventure and Saint Epiphanius exclaim, "O most pure Virgin, we have no hope but in thee." Saint Germain and Saint Ildephonso add, that "the treasures of all sorts of grace have been intrusted to her." Saint Anthony and Saint Peter Damian say the same thing. Gerson and Richard of Saint Lawrence are animated by the same sentiments, and express them in the same way, as may be seen in the *Reply to some Criticisms*, by Saint Alphonsus Liguori, from which nearly all this instruction is taken. Finally, do we not commonly see the faithful having recourse to the intercession of Mary to obtain the graces which they desire? They regard her, and with reason, as the only channel through which God sheds the abundance of his blessings upon us. Woe to us, were that precious channel obstructed! For, even as when Holofernes wished to take the city of Bethulia, he ordered the aqueducts to be cut off, so the devil, when he would possess himself of a soul, tries first to deprive it of its devotion to the Mother of God, in order that, the channel of grace being once cut off, the soul may easily become his prey.

Would we, then, go to Jesus Christ? Let us go to him by Mary. Would we cull the flower? Let us bend the stem towards us. Let us remember that, even as the shepherds found the Child with Mary his Mother, so shall we never find the one without the other. Jesus and Mary are too closely united to be separated; and that is precisely the sentiment of the Church when she says, "*Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis ostende.*" Let us, then, honor Mary as the dispenser of all the graces of God. This truth has been maintained and rec-

commended by all the saints. It increases our piety towards our good Mother; it exalts the worship that we owe her; finally, it assures us that, after having been her servants, we shall one day have the happiness to receive the reward attached to that title.

EXAMPLE.

The extravagant Libertine recovers grace and fortune by the influence of Mary.

Cæsar and Vincent de Beauvais relate, that a young gentleman, having dissipated all his fortune in excesses and debauchery, saw himself reduced to such extreme want that he had no resource but to ask alms. Ashamed to beg in his own country, where he had been seen rich, he resolved to go abroad, and carry his misery far away. Having travelled a little way, he fell in with a former servant of his father, who, seeing his affliction, told him to console himself, for that he would take him to a magnificent and most liberal prince, who would make his fortune. Whereupon he accompanies the young man through a wood, to a sort of pond. There a conversation takes place between him and an invisible person. Being asked with whom he spoke, the detestable wretch, who was nothing less than a magician, replied, "With the demon." Then our young man evincing some alarm, the other exhorted him to fear nothing, and addressing the devil, "My lord," said he, "this young man is in extreme poverty, and would fain be restored to his former affluent condition." "Very well," replied the enemy of souls, "provided he obeys me, I will make him richer than before; but first, I require that he shall renounce God." At this proposition the young man shuddered, but urged

and seduced by the magician, he at length consented. "But that is not all," resumed the demon, "he must also renounce Mary, our mortal enemy." "Oh, as for that," replied the young man, "I will do no such thing. I would beg rather than renounce my Mother;" and leaving the magician and the demon there, instead of pursuing his journey, he made the best of his way back to his own neighborhood.

On the way he comes to a church consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. He goes in, and, filled with remorse, he kneels down, and with tears beseeches the Mother of God, whose image was over the altar, to obtain for him the pardon of his sins—but especially of the frightful crime of having denied his Maker. O prodigy! he immediately seems to hear a voice proceeding from the image, and Mary interceding with her Son, who yields to her entreaties. This took place in presence of a rich man of the place, who had purchased all the young spendthrift's property. The mercy of Mary towards that sinner, and the mark of protection which she had granted to him, made such an impression on his mind that he gave his only daughter in marriage to the young man, and made him heir to his whole fortune.

It was thus that, by the protection of Mary, the young gentleman recovered the grace of God, and even his temporal possessions.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Jane of Valois, Queen of France.)

Make it your duty to ornament, or contribute to ornament, the temples and altars of Mary. That pious practice is infinitely agreeable to her. Saint Jane of Valois, queen of France, besides consecrating her own person

and an entire order to her, in honor of the mystery of the Annunciation, also employed her royal hands in working for the decoration of her altars, and exerted herself to the utmost to increase the splendor of her worship.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Germain.)

O my Sovereign, thou art the consolation that God himself has given me! Thou art my guide in the pilgrimage of this world, strength in my weakness, riches in my poverty, balm to my wounds, relief to my pains, and it is thou who breakest my chains. Hear the humble prayers of thy servant—allow thyself to be touched by his tears—thou, my patience, my refuge, my hope, my safety, and my support! Amen.

THIRTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE PROTECTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS ALL-POWERFUL WITH GOD.

“Ask what thou wilt, my mother, for I can refuse thee nothing.”—*Third Book of Kings*, chap. ii.

WE read in the Gospel that Jesus Christ was perfectly submissive to Mary here on earth. It is true that the Blessed Virgin no longer commands her Son in heaven, but we may nevertheless say that her prayers are still the prayers of a mother, and that in that quality she cannot and ought not to meet with any refusal.

Accordingly, the holy Fathers, animated by that

thought, have spoken in the strongest and most expressive manner touching the efficacy of the Blessed Virgin's powerful intercession with God. Saint Peter Damian, addressing himself to her, says: "All power has been given thee, in heaven and on earth, and nothing is impossible to thee; for thou canst restore hope to those who have lost it." Elsewhere he adds, that "when Mary asks any thing in our favor, she seems less to supplicate than to dictate laws; and she has rather the air of a queen than that of a subject." Saint Bernardine of Sienna does not hesitate to assure us, that "all is subject to the empire of Mary in this sense—that God hears the prayers of his Mother as though they were commands." It only remains that Mary should wish to obtain, in order to obtain; and accordingly, Albertus Magnus makes her say: "Pray me to will:" so in praying to her we may be assured that the will to exert her influence in our behalf will never be wanting in her.

And is it not really true, that whilst that good and tender Mother lived on earth, her dearest and most habitual thought was to aid the unfortunate and relieve the wretched? Now, if she already showed herself so anxious to do us good, and if she enjoyed the fair privilege of obtaining all she asked from her adorable Son, with how much stronger reason may we not believe that that prerogative and that desire to do good must be greatly increased in Mary, now that she draws from the inexhaustible source of the celestial treasures! And it is that power and that beneficence of Mary in heaven which the Church claims, when she invokes her under the two titles of powerful Virgin and clement Virgin. Would the condition of Mary, in the dwelling of glory,

be inferior to her condition during her mortal life? Certainly not. And yet, in the course of that mortal life, she gave many shining proofs of her power with God; especially at the wedding of Cana, where, the wine beginning to fail, the Blessed Virgin said first to Jesus Christ: "They have no wine." "What is to thee and to me?" immediately answered Jesus Christ; "my hour is not yet come—that is to say, the time for proving by miracles the truth of my doctrine." And notwithstanding the apparent harshness of that reply, and the sort of refusal which it contains, Mary nevertheless said to the waiters: "Do whatsoever he shall tell you;" persuaded that it was sufficient that she had expressed her wish to have it fulfilled. And, in fact, Jesus performed the miracle; "and that to show us," say the interpreters, "that the decree which fixed the time for the manifestation of his divine power was subordinate to another decree, by which the Lord obliged himself to refuse nothing to his Mother, when she asked any thing of him." What influence, then, must not that divine Mother have with her adorable Son, who says to her, as Solomon said to Bethsheba: "Ask, my mother, whatsoever thou wilt, for I can refuse thee nothing." Jesus Christ gave, for thirty-three years on earth, the example of the deference due to parents. And though clothed in all the brightness of his glory, we venture to say that, to a certain extent, he continues to fulfil that sacred obligation towards his holy Mother, whose sigh alone is more available with him than the prayers of all the saints together; and that she can really do by her prayers what God can do by his power—as is expressed in an old adage, which another Father of the Church addresses to her: "*Quod Deus imperio, tu prece Virgo, potes.*"

Let us then exclaim, with Saint Bonaventure, "O admirable goodness of our God, who has vouchsafed to ordain so powerful an advocate for miserable sinners, to the end that all may be saved by her, through her assistance! Oh, ineffable mercy of God, who, in order that we might not depart from him through fear of the sentence he is to pronounce, has given us his own Mother and the Mistress of grace!"

EXAMPLE.

Confidence in Mary fully justified.

A fleet of ten or twelve vessels going to Venice, was at sea a few leagues from Our Lady of Loretto, on the eve of a festival of the Blessed Virgin. All the crew wished to go there to hear Mass on the following day. The commander objected, for fear of the Turkish corsairs. A sailor, named Antonio, full of confidence in the Blessed Virgin, said that he felt strong enough to guard the convoy himself alone, under the protection of the Mother of God. His confidence inspired all the others, even the commander himself, who consented to the landing. They all set out early in the morning, and Antonio remained alone. After some time, he perceived some large vessels bearing down upon him, full sail, and recognized them as Turkish corsairs, bent upon seizing the vessels of which he was the only defender. He fervently recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin, reminding her that it was in her honor all the rest of the crews had quitted the vessels. He placed himself at the top of the deck, in the most exposed vessel, crouched down behind the bulwark, and crept along with an axe in his hand. Some moments after, he feels

the bark shaken: it was a Turk who had placed his hand on the top of the bulwark. Antonio rises immediately on his knees, and, with a strong blow of the axe, severed the Turk's wrist, the hand falling into the bark. . Antonio crouches down again, but the mutilated Turk gave so frightful a cry, that it terrified all his companions "It is a snare they have laid for us!" he exclaimed "these vessels are full of armed men, who are concealing themselves that they may take us by surprise." At those words all the Turks took flight. Antonio soon after, raising his head, saw them far off at sea. He threw himself on his knees, and returned thanks to his powerful patroness for a protection so marked. Meanwhile his companions returning from Loretto, perceiving the Turkish fleet retiring, were sore dismayed. They doubted not that they had carried off Antonio, with all their barks. But how agreeable was their surprise when Antonio met them, with his axe uplifted, the Turk's hand still hanging from it, and told them all that had passed. Then, all together, they began to sing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, to thank her for a victory so striking.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Benedict.)

Resist temptations for love of the Blessed Virgin. It was by this practice that Saint Benedict put the devil to flight as often as he attacked him.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint William of Paris.)

I come to thee, glorious Mother of God, whom the Church of the Saints calls *Mother of Mercy*; thou art she O Mary, who has never met with a refusal; whose

mercy has never failed any one, nor whose clemency rejected any suppliant. God forbid, mediatrix of men, and their only hope, after thy Son, that my sins should be an obstacle to exercising towards me thy merciful office. Ah, no! assuredly, I hope that thou wilt deign to obtain for me the grace to expiate them, and to repent of them sincerely. Amen.

THIRTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE CLEMENCY AND MERCY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN ARE UNBOUNDED.

“The law of clemency is on her lips.”—*Prov.*, chap. xxxi.

WE read in the Holy Scriptures, in the book of Esther, that in the reign of Assuerus there appearing an edict of the king condemning all the Jews to death, Mordecai, an Israelite, full of zeal for the worship of God, and of charity for the safety of his brethren, caused Queen Esther to be told that he commended the Jews to her protection, and that for their lives she should not hesitate to go to the king to represent to him their sad condition, and to obtain the revocation of the fatal decree. Esther at first shrank from the difficulty of the undertaking, fearing that she would herself incur the anger of Assuerus, whom it was forbidden by law to approach without an express order; but Mordecai having told the queen that God had only raised her to the throne that she might relieve her brethren, even at the cost of her life, Esther

went to the king, who, on seeing her, asked with an angry air what she wanted. "O King," she replied, "if I have found favor in thy sight, I ask mercy for my people whom wicked men have devoted to death."

This is precisely what happens every day in regard to Mary, when sinners call upon her for assistance. Esther, by her mildness and her goodness, is one of the most touching figures of the Blessed Virgin; and what the one did formerly on behalf of the Jews, the other is constantly doing for us with God, for the exercise of mercy is her daily office—I should rather say it is her unceasing occupation. Every thing in her recalls that august character. Her title of queen, under which the Church salutes her, shows us that she truly discharges its duties, since that title, as Albert the Great remarks, signifies *providence* and *compassion* for the unhappy. Mary is, therefore, *all mercy*. It is her appendage, or, rather, it is her essence, so to speak; so that whoever names Mary, names mercy, as Mary cannot be without mercy, or mercy be dispensed, in the sense in which we understand it, without Mary; and the celebrated Gerson well expressed that thought when, on these words of the psalmist—"I have learned two things, that power is God's, and that mercy belongs to the Lord"—he observes that the kingdom of God consists in these two things, *justice* and *mercy*. Jesus Christ has, as it were, made two parts of it. He has reserved to himself the domain of justice, and has ceded that of mercy to Mary. The Angel of the Schools perfectly confirms this explanation, when he says that "the half of the kingdom was given to Mary as her portion when she conceived and bore the eternal Word; so that she became Queen of *mercy*, as her Son is the King of *justice*."

David said to God: "Lord thou wilt give judgment to the King, and justice to his Son." But Saint Bonaventure, in his psalter, turns that verse in this way: "Lord, give *justice* to the King, and *mercy* to his Mother."

What could we not say to prove that Mary is all mercy, and that every thing she does tends to *clemency*? It is in order to mark those two great attributes that the prophet said, "God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness." But what is that holy oil that Mary has received from the hands of her God? It is that of *mercy*, the effusion of which over the hearts of the unhappy fills them with joy and consolation, thinking that in heaven their queen is only occupied fulfilling for them the office of *mercy*, which causes her to shine in that multitude of graces which she ceases not to impart to them. Standing constantly before the throne of the Lord, she says to him: "O my King, who art also my Son, I ask thy pardon for this sinner whom thou hast redeemed with the blood I gave thee." Finally, she continually implores the goodness of God, availing herself of all the titles which so endear her to him; and the law of clemency, which is on her lips, prevailing always, every prayer that issues from her mouth has almost the force of a law. "Queen of mercy, she opens at will the abyss of divine mercy, so that no sinner can perish if he is protected by Mary." But it may be that the greatness, the sanctity of this powerful queen, alarm us, and make us fear to present ourselves before her, we who are so guilty in the sight of God. "Let us take courage," says Saint Gregory, "for the more holy and elevated Mary is, the more gentle and affable she shows herself to the sinner. It is not with Mary as it was with King Assuerus of old, whom no one could approach uncalled for on penalty

of death. Mary welcomes all men without exception; the rich as well as the poor, the learned as well as the ignorant. She offers them the milk of mercy to animate their confidence, and the wool of her intercession as an impregnable rampart to deaden the thunderbolts which divine justice hurls against them. No; it is not with Mary as with earthly kings, who promise much and give little, either because they are not able to give that which they promised, or because they have not the will to do so; but the Queen of *mercy* disappoints no one, and she can do what she will in favor of her servants. No one leaves her presence with a discontented heart. What is most admirable is, that the poorer we are the more we are assisted; the more wretched we are, the more the mercy of that generous queen surrounds us on every side.

Let our confidence in Mary, then, have no bounds, since we know that her power equals the extent of her mercy. That good Mother herself gave Saint Bridget to understand as much when she told her: "I am the Queen of heaven and the Mother of mercy. I am the joy of the just, and the gate of succor by which sinners come to God; there is none on earth to whom I refuse my pity; not one who has not obtained some grace through my intercession, were it only that of being less violently tempted by the demon. There is no sinner," she added, "unless he be absolutely accursed—which is to be understood of the irrevocable malediction of the damned—there is no sinner so rejected of God that he may not recover his grace through my intercession. Wo, therefore—wo to all eternity!—to him who, in this life, being able to secure my mercy, does not do so, and thus loses himself by his own fault."

EXAMPLE.

History of a great Sinner, converted by having Recourse to Mary.

A very touching instance of Mary's mercy towards sinners is that of Mary of Egypt. At the age of twelve years, she absconded from the paternal roof, and went to Alexandria, where her licentious life was a scandal to the inhabitants.

After sixteen years of a disorderly life, she took a fancy to join a party of pilgrims, embarking for Jerusalem, whither they were going to celebrate the feast of the *Exaltation of the Holy Cross*. A feeling of curiosity made her desire to enter the church with the crowd; but she felt herself repulsed by an invisible hand, and three times she tried in vain to cross the threshold. Illumined by a ray of celestial light, she entered into herself, and comprehended that God repelled her from his house on account of her crimes. Under the peristyle of the Church there was an image of the Blessed Virgin painted on the wall. Raising her eyes by chance, and perceiving this image, she prostrated herself before it, and, melting into tears, she prayed thus in her heart: "O mother of my God, have pity upon a miserable creature! Thou art the refuge of sinners, refuse me not the consolation of seeing and adoring that sacred wood upon which my Saviour, thy Son, shed his blood for my redemption. After which I promise thee to go weep for my crimes during the remainder of my life wheresoever thou shalt direct me."

Feeling certain that the church would now be open to her, she presents herself, and enters like the others without any resistance. She adores the cross with sen-

timents of the most lively compunction. Returning then to the image, "O Mother of God! O my protectress!" said she, "behold, I am ready, whither wilt thou that I should go?" A voice replied, "Cross the Jordan, and you shall find rest."

The sinner made a general confession of her whole life, received Holy Communion; then, having crossed the river, she buried herself in the desert, which she understood was to be the place of her penance. During the first seventeen years that she remained there, she was exposed to the continual assaults of the enemy of souls. In those violent tempests, she did nothing else but invoke Mary; and, by her assistance, she was always victorious. After those years of trial, the combats ceased, and she had lived forty-seven years in the desert, when, by a disposition of divine Providence, God permitted the Abbot Zosimus to discover that treasure. The penitent related her history to the pious solitary, and then begged him to return the following year, and bring her the holy Eucharist. The abbot promised to do so, and kept his word. After having received communion, she made the holy man promise that he would return the year after on such a day. Zosimus went back accordingly, but he found her dead. Her body was surrounded by a great light, and on the sand were traced these words: "Bury here the body of the poor sinner Mary, and pray for the repose of her soul." Zosimus buried the holy body, by the help of a lion, who came and dug out the grave with his claws.

On returning to his monastery, he related the marvels of divine mercy which he had seen, and Mary's protection of that holy penitent. (*Life of the Saint.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Bernard.)

Often have recourse to Mary. It is one of the practices in her honor that pleases her the most. It is faithfully observed by all the devout, and St. Bernard, after having practised it himself, unceasingly recommended it to others.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Bernard.)

O Mary! refuse me not thy assistance; and how couldst thou withhold thy pity from me, since thou art the Queen of Mercy? Who are the subjects of mercy, if not the wretched? I am the most wretched of all, and thou shouldst, therefore, have more care over me. Say not that the multitude of my offences prevents thee from assisting me; the greatness of my malice cannot surpass the greatness of thy clemency; nothing resists thee, because the Creator of all, who is also thine, has honored thee as his Mother, making thy glory his own. Have pity, then, on us, and think of saving us. Amen.

 THIRTY-NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 INSTRUCTION: THE HOLY VIRGIN IS OUR TRUE AND GOOD MOTHER.

"Jesus, then, seeing his Mother and the disciple whom he loved, said to his Mother, 'Woman, behold thy Son.'"—*St. John.*, chap. xviii.

It was from the height of the cross that Jesus Christ gave us Mary for a Mother, in the person of St. John, when he said, "Woman, behold thy Son." We are,

therefore, the children of Mary. She is our mother, and hence the great love she bears us in that quality. "For the love of parents for their children," remarks Saint Thomas, "is a necessary love, so that," says he, "the divine law which gives children the precept of loving their fathers and mothers, gives no precept to parents to love their children, because that love is so deeply and so strongly inspired by nature, that it is found not merely in all mankind, but even in the most ferocious beasts."

It is related of the tigress, that when the hunters embark her young, if the latter, by their cries, make known to her where they are, she throws herself into the sea, and follows the vessel that bears them away, nor gives up the pursuit till she has reached it. If, then, all men, and even the most ferocious beasts, feel that love, what must be the tender affection of Mary for us who are her beloved children, well beloved, having cost her so much! Hence she tells us by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "Even though the mother should forget the fruit of her womb, I will never forget you;" and the Holy Ghost makes her say, elsewhere, "I am the mother of pure love." That is to say, "I am nothing but love, there is in me no other sentiment."

Who, in fact, could conceive the immensity of the love which that tender Mother has for us? She was inflamed with it all her life; she burned with it on Calvary; and that ardor, of which we can neither measure the extent, nor sound the depth, made her spare nothing for us, not even her own Son. As Saint Bonaventure says, in paraphrasing a passage of Saint John, "Mary so loved us that she gave us her only-begotten Son."

What a double spectacle of love, O my God, is presented to us by Jesus Christ expiring on the cross for

us, and Mary standing at the foot of that same cross, consenting to the immolation of her adorable Son through love of us !

But, the better to appreciate the strength and the extent of Mary's love, we must see whence it has its source, and weigh its motives.

The first of all is the *love of God*.

The Apostle Saint John teaches us, that the love of God and the love of the neighbor are closely united, and that he who loves God must also love his neighbor ; whence it must be concluded that the first of these loves cannot increase in a soul without the second increasing in proportion. It was because the saints loved God much that they did great things for their brethren. Fortune, liberty, life itself, they sacrificed all to procure them some good, and especially the good of heaven. Behold Saint Francis Xavier climbing steep mountains, surmounting all obstacles, braving all dangers, to gain barbarous peoples to God. Behold Saint Francis de Sales, who, to convert the heretics of Chablais, ran the risk of being drowned a hundred times by crossing an impetuous torrent on a frail piece of wood, which served him for a boat,—Saint Paulinus, who became a slave to deliver the son of a poor widow,—Saint Vincent de Paul, who took the place of a galley slave, in order to restore him to his family. But if the love of God has produced such happy results in the saints in relation to the neighbor, what shall we say of Mary who, from the first moment of her existence, loved God more than all the angels and saints combined ? “The fire of divine love wherewith I was inflamed,” said the Blessed Virgin, one day, to Sister Mary of the Crucifix, would have consumed heaven and earth, could they have felt its effects,

and the ardor of the seraphim was no more in comparison thereto than the breath of the cold winds."

It must be concluded, that if, in divine love, Mary left angels and saints so far behind her, none of them could ever have equalled her in the love of the neighbor. To this first motive, which is so well adapted to show us how much Mary loves us, let us add that which may be deduced from the price it cost her to bring us forth to the life of grace acquired by the sacrifice she made of what was dearest to her in this world, her divine Son. "Yes," says Father Nieremberg, "Mary truly gave us her first-born, when, in virtue of her maternal right, and the jurisdiction she had over him in that quality, she permitted him to go to death; and even when others were silent, whether from hatred or from fear, Mary was silent too, but through love for us; and, from that motive, she undertook not the defence of her adorable Son before his judges."

Mary would say nothing to prevent a death upon which she knew our eternal salvation depended; she loved us too much to oppose the consummation of a sacrifice which so powerfully concurred with our welfare. She preferred us, then, to her own Son, whom she sacrificed to manifest her love to us. It was during the three hours that the bloody agony of our Saviour lasted, that Mary, standing near the cross, gave us, in her heart, that adorable Son with a constancy and courage so heroic, that Saint Anselm and Saint Antoninus concur in saying, that she would have immolated him with her own hands to satisfy divine justice, and merit heaven for us. Doubtless, nothing stronger can be said touching the love Mary has for us; and yet there is still a third motive, far superior to those we have already pre-

sented. It is that of the price of Christ's blood, of which Mary had so perfect a knowledge.

Let us suppose a mother whose only son had ransomed a servant by twenty years of suffering and imprisonment. "Is it not true that, for that one reason," says Saint Alphonso Liguori, "she would hold that servant in great esteem?" Now, behold Mary, in regard to us. Her love for men is in proportion to the infinite value of the blood that has redeemed them; and because Jesus Christ has redeemed all men, there are none whom Mary does not love and protect!

"Happy, therefore, are those who love thee! O Queen of heaven!" says the venerable Berchmans; "for if I love Mary, I am sure of perseverance, and I shall obtain from God all I ask of him."

Let us imitate that holy young man, in having for Mary all the tenderness of a child. Let us remember, in order to have these sentiments, that a sinner, having addressed to her this prayer: "Show that thou art my Mother," she answered him: "Show that thou art my son."

EXAMPLE.

A client of Mary consoled by her in his worst agony.

The blessed Bernard Tolomeus, founder of the Order of the Fathers of Mount Olivet, who from his childhood nourished in his heart a tender devotion to Mary, was one day much troubled in his hermitage at Ancona, by the fear of not being saved, and of not having yet received from God the pardon of his sins. The Mother of God appeared to him, and said: "What do you fear, my child? Take courage! God has already forgiven you; he is pleased with the life you lead. Continue as you

are, I will assist you, and you shall be saved." The hermit continued to live holily, and when the hour of his death came, he expired in the arms of Mary. (*Life of the Blessed Bertolo.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the devout Cornelius à Lapide.)

As Mary loves us so much, it is very profitable to say to God, as did Cornelius à Lapide, and other great servants of Mary, "Lord! grant us what the Blessed Virgin asks of thee for us."

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bonaventure.)

O my Mother, and my protectress! my sins render me unworthy to approach thee, and I ought to expect nothing from thee but chastisement; but even shouldst thou reject me, yea, even though thou shouldst deprive me of life, I will never doubt thy will to save me. I place all my confidence in thee, and, provided I am happy enough always to implore thy mercy, I have the firm hope of going to praise thee in heaven, with that innumerable multitude of thy servants who have been saved through thy powerful intercession. Amen.

FORTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE SURE REFUGE OF THE PENITENT SINNER.

“He shall cry to me, and I will hear him.”—*Ps. xc.*

THE Church, always inspired by the Holy Ghost, proclaims the consoling truth that Mary is the secure refuge of all sinners; but sinners must, at least, have the sincere desire to abandon their sins, otherwise Mary cannot interest herself for them with her divine Son. And that is what Saint Bridget relates having heard from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, who, addressing his holy Mother, said: “You hold out your hand to those who wish to rise after their fall, and return to God, and no one is sent away from you void of consolation.” Let the sinner, then, recommend himself confidently to Mary; let him persevere in the practices of her devotion, and he is sure, sooner or later, of seeing his chains broken.

It is an error to say—and the Council of Trent has condemned it—that all the prayers said and good works done in the state of sin, are so many sins. No, doubtless; “for,” says Saint Bernard, “although prayer be not beautiful in the mouth of a sinner, because it is not accompanied by charity, it does not fail to be salutary, and salutary for emerging from sin.” And Saint Thomas teaches us, that it is fit to obtain pardon for our sins. “The efficacy of the request,” he says, “being founded not on the merit of him who prays, but on the goodness of God, and the merits of Jesus Christ, who assures us,

that whatsoever we ask in his name shall be granted us." The same may be said of the Blessed Virgin, in whose name God refuses nothing, and still less what we ask of him for working out our salvation, which is so dear to him. Saint Anselm also tells us, on this subject, that "if he who prays is not worthy of being heard, the merits of Mary, whose assistance he implores, will pray for him." And the graces which sinners are unworthy to receive, are granted to Mary, in order that they may obtain them through her. She is their Mother; and it is the office of a good mother, who, having two sons, and come to know that a deadly hatred exists between them, to do all she can to reconcile them. Now, Mary being at once Mother of Jesus Christ and Mother of man, when she sees a sinner the enemy of Jesus Christ and in disgrace with him, her trouble is so great that there is nothing that she will not do to reconcile him to her Son. She is, at the same time, the Mother of the sinful and the just; and she cannot bear that there should be discord between them.

Mary, then, is the secure refuge of all sinners; and she so sensibly compassionates their ills, that it seems as though she feels them herself. It is that compassion of Mary for sinners which is pointed out to us in the case of the Canaanite woman, who, addressing herself to Jesus Christ, besought him to deliver her daughter from the demon that possessed her, saying: "Have pity on me, Son of David; have pity on me." But as it was her daughter who was tormented, why did she not name her? On the contrary, she constantly besought the Lord to have pity on herself. Ah! it is that mothers feel as *their own* all the afflictions of their children.

When Mary sees a sinner at her feet, she addresses

herself to her Son, and says: "My Son, my Lord, and my God, behold this sinful soul that implores my mercy. It is my child, I gave birth to it on Calvary, at the foot of thy cross, whereon thou didst shed thy blood to save it from the snares of Satan. It has had the misfortune of falling back into them, but I conjure thee to have pity on its sad state; it is cruelly tormented. And if it inspire thee not with confidence to induce thee to deliver it from its evils, have pity then on me, who am thy Mother."

To this most consoling figure, which shows us how merciful Mary is towards sinners, we will also add that of the woman whose story we read in the Second Book of Kings, and whose wisdom is praised by the Holy Ghost. It is there related, that a woman of Thecua, having presented herself before King David, spoke to him in these terms: "O King! I had two sons, and they quarrelled with each other, and the one struck the other and slew him. Now, justice has laid hold of the culprit, and I, who have already lost one son, see myself on the point of being also deprived of the other. O King! have pity on a desolate mother, and let them not take from her the only son who remains to her." Then David, touched with compassion, ordered that the criminal should be released, and restored to his mother. That is precisely what Mary does when she sees a sinner fallen into disgrace with the sovereign Judge, and claiming her assistance. She addresses God in the same language which the woman of Thecua addressed of old to King David. "O my King!" she says, "I had two sons, Jesus and man. Man killed my Jesus on the cross. Now, thy justice threatens to strike the criminal. Lord, wouldst thou deprive me of the second son, after I have lost the first?"

Ah no, assuredly. God could not condemn a sinner who has recourse to Mary; and as he himself gave her to be the Mother of that sinner, it is well understood by him that she is to fulfil that office; and that is precisely what she does every day with unexampled goodness and mercy. Behold how the devout Lausperge makes the Lord speak on this subject: "I have intrusted sinners to Mary, that she may care for them as her children. She so faithfully acquits herself of this charge, that she allows none of them to perish—especially if they invoke her; but, as far as it is possible, she saves them."

Ah! why, then, have not all sinners recourse to that tender Mother? Not one of them but might obtain grace through her mediation. But let us never forget the essential condition attached to our reconciliation with God through the means of his holy Mother. It is sincere regret for all our faults, the efficacious desire not again to fall into them, without which Mary cannot love us, so long as we choose to be the enemies of her divine Son. In saying to her, "Show that thou art our Mother," we must be able to add, "we wish to show ourselves thy true children by a regular and Christian life." She is, truly, the *Mother of Mercy*, but we would make her a *mother of grief* by crucifying her divine Son by our works. She is our refuge, but it would be cruel to think that the refugee would avail himself of the goodness of her who gives him shelter to wound her in the most sensible part. We are, it is true, her children; but to merit the effects of that glorious affiliation, we must rise from sin: for he is unworthy to bear the beautiful name of a son of Mary, who tarnishes it by criminal actions. Doubtless, Mary will always be the refuge of all sinners, but of all *penitent* sinners. Without that condition, it

would be necessary to suppose what is revolting—that Mary is the protectress of sin.

Let the sinner, whatever be the number, whatever be the enormity of his sins, have recourse to Mary. Let him place his confidence in her. Let him take all the means that are in his power to break the chains which hold him captive under the tyranny of Satan. Mary will aid him with her powerful succor, and she will never cease to pray to the Lord until that lost sheep be brought back into the fold of God's grace and mercy.

EXAMPLE.

The sufferings of the Mind and of the Body simultaneously dispelled by having recourse to Mary.

The venerable mother Alice de Clerc, first mother of the order of the Congregation of Our Lady, desiring to inspire a religious with confidence in the Blessed Virgin, confidentially related to her the particulars of a singular favor that she had herself received from her. She told her that in the year 1620, being at St. Nicholas, to have the cloister of her monastery put up, she fell ill of a violent and protracted fever, and that when her disease was at its worst, it pleased God to try her still more by the most fearful temptations, and that to such a degree, that she no longer knew what she ought to do. In that extremity, she bethought her of having recourse to her holy and powerful protectress, the blessed Mother of God, whose assistance in her sore need she sought and implored with her whole heart and soul. The same hour that Mother of consolation appeared to her in the infirmary, quite close to her bed. She was as it were in a cloud, with admirable majesty, and all radiant with light. She

approached the sufferer, who was instantly delivered from her afflicting temptation, and was never again disturbed by it during that illness.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Venerable Lausperge.)

Ask the Blessed Virgin for her blessing, going into your chamber and going out of it. It was the practice of Lausperge, a Carthusian monk of great repute. His example was followed by all the Carthusian fathers.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernard.)

It is to thee we raise our suppliant looks, O Queen of the universe. Guilty of so many sins, we must appear before our Judge. Who shall appease him? It can only be thou, O Blessed Virgin, who lovest him so much, and art so tenderly beloved by him. Let our sighs and supplications reach thy heart. O Mother of mercy, we implore thy protection. Calm the indignation of thy Son. Restore us to his favor. Thou dost not abhor the sinner, be his crimes ever so great, if he address his sighs to thee, and ask thy intercession. Deign, then, to extend thy hand to us, and reconcile us with our Judge. Amen.

FORTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS FULL OF LOVE FOR
THOSE WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO HER.

“A fair olive-tree in the plains.”—*Ecc.*, chap. xxiv.

It is not without reason that the Holy Ghost compares the Blessed Virgin to an olive-tree planted in the midst of the fields; for, even as the olive yields only oil, the symbol of mercy and of sweetness, so from the Blessed Virgin there can emanate nothing but acts of clemency and charity. She is that Virgin most prudent, as the Church calls her, *Virgo prudentissima*, and the oil of the lamp; that is to say, the treasury of the divine graces of which she is the dispenser. Far from being sufficient to herself alone, as is said of the virgins in the Gospel, she supplies the wants of all those who ask of her. What do I say? She offers to all those who present themselves. Like the beautiful and generous Rebecca, she gives to drink from the inexhaustible well of her charity, not only to Eliezer, the figure of the just, but to sinners, represented by the camels of Abraham's faithful servant. Thus Mary, to render the similitude more striking between her and the young sister of Laban, gives even more than is asked of her. She loads her servants with favors, and she promises much to those who do not as yet serve her, assuring them that under her auspices they shall be well received by God.

Mary was prefigured in the Old Law by the promised land flowing with milk and honey; for her bounty is so great that she cannot remain a single moment, says the Abbé Guenée, without producing fruits of sweetness and of mercy; and it is because of her promptitude in assisting us that she is compared to the moon. "Because," says Saint Ildebert, "that even as the salutary influences of that star are felt by the lowest bodies on the earth, so the effects of Mary's goodness are profitable to the most unworthy sinners." According to Saint Anselm, "It is no uncommon occurrence that our salvation is obtained more quickly by invoking the name of Mary than by invoking that of Jesus Christ." And it is in that view that Hugo de Saint Victor exhorts us fearlessly to approach Mary—Queen of the universe and Mother of God, it is true, but also daughter of Adam, and pure creature, knowing all our miseries; so that her goodness impels her, as if irresistibly, to alleviate them. "And, in fact," exclaims Saint Bernard, "she makes herself all unto all; she has rendered herself the debtor of the wise and the ignorant, and the bosom of her mercy is open to every one. It is there that the poor find shelter, the sick health, the afflicted consolation, the deserted succor, and he who is, in doubt, enlightenment."

This thought explains to us why the Holy Scripture compares Mary to an olive planted in the open fields, and not in a fine garden surrounded by walls. "It is," says Cardinal Hugo, "that if that olive-tree were inclosed on all sides the passers by could not approach it; whereas, placing it within reach of every one, every one can gather its fruits." And, in fact, where is the man who has not received some benefit from Mary? Where is the culprit who, having requested her to obtain pardon for

his crimes, has not speedily seen the sentence of his condemnation revoked by the assistance which Mary obtained for him to make him return into favor with God? She sees all our ills, and none amongst the Saints is so touched by them as she. What do I say? Whenever she perceives miseries, she hastens to bring the remedies, proportioning her assistance to our necessities. So that wherever wants are most numerous and most pressing, there also her charity is most active, and the effects of her goodness most abundant. There is her office; there is her mission: she has always acquitted herself of it for our benefit; and so she will ever do till the end of time, as she herself declares by the mouth of the sacred historian, who says: "*Ab initio et usque ad futurum sæculum non desinam*. That is to say, according to the explanation of Cardinal Hugo, "I have never ceased, and I never will cease, to succor men in their miseries."

And, in fact, we cannot doubt that Mary is the perfect counterpart of her divine Son, and that she has all his spirit. Now, what was the spirit of Jesus Christ, if not a spirit of meekness and of mercy? He is a God of clemency and of charity. Here he sends away a public sinner absolved; there, he gives the name of *friend* to the perfidious apostle who betrayed him: everywhere he shows himself, by his works, that envoy from heaven, who came on earth not to destroy, but to save sinners. But behold the image of his divine Mother's conduct. Always ready to receive our prayers and to relieve us in our miseries, she does not examine whether we have much or little claim upon her bounty. It suffices that we present ourselves to her with the desire of receiving in order to be assured of obtaining.

Let us, then, fear nothing; let us approach Mary, who-

soever we may be, and in whatever state we may find ourselves.

The prophet complained, that when God struck his people, there was no one to stay his hand; and, in fact, we see that, in the Old Law, the Lord chastised promptly and severely, whereas now it seems that his justice is relaxed by the patience and forbearance which he displays towards the greatest sinners. Ah! let us not be surprised at that; it is Mary who, placing herself between the Judge and the criminal, appeases the wrath of God, and disarms his vengeance. It is through love for that incomparable Virgin that God no longer launches his thunderbolts upon our guilty heads. She clothed him with flesh at his Incarnation, and he, in turn, has clothed her with the right to give grace to all those who implore her merciful goodness, which is as great as that of God. It may be said of Mary, but in a sense opposed to that which Saint Peter applied to the words, *circuit quærens*, that she turns unceasingly round us to see if she can bestow any grace upon us. It is she who covers us with her mantle, to protect us from the arrows of the enemy of our salvation. She continually interests herself on our behalf, and her goodness makes use of a thousand means to obtain for us the grace of God; at the same time that she renders herself terrible as an army in battle array to the powers of hell, when they would declare war upon us. Let us, then, go to Mary. If we are just, she will present our merits to God; if we are sinners, she will present her own in our favor: if we are in a medium state of virtue, she will supply, by her mercy, all that is wanting in us; for the goodness of Mary is truly admirable. Like Wisdom, she reaches mightily and sweetly from end to end of the universe.

She is compared to that mysterious ladder of Jacob's only to make us understand that she embraces the entire world—heaven to receive graces from God, and earth to dispense them to men.

Let us, then, press onward to that throne of mercy whence our happiness will come; let us confidently address Mary in that touching exclamation of Saint Bernard: "O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary! Clement to the needy; compassionate to those who invoke her; mild to those who love her; indulgent towards penitents; benign in favor of the just; gracious to those who contemplate her; generous in her bounties; sweet when she gives herself to those who seek her!"

EXAMPLE.

How happy Children are whose Parents are devoted to Mary.

One of the most illustrious preachers of the last century was called, about the middle of the night, to confess a young lord who had been seized with apoplexy. Hastening to the place, he found a house all in disorder, a despairing wife, physicians employing in vain all the resources of their art, a patient insensible. In this troubled way the night passes. At daybreak, the churches being open, the confessor goes to say Mass for the patient in a chapel of the Blessed Virgin. At the *Ite, missa est*, a lacquey came to announce to him that his master had recovered his consciousness. What was the glad surprise of the religious, when, returning to the nobleman, who had been only too notorious for his profligate life, he found him penetrated with sentiments of the liveliest compunction, asking pardon of God, rather by sighs and tears than by words, and, with

heroic generosity, offering his life for the expiation of his sins ! In these dispositions, the patient makes his confession, and asks for the last sacraments. The confessor, touched and edified, asked his penitent what could have moved the Lord to work that great prodigy of mercy in his behalf. "Alas ! father," he replied, in a voice broken by sobs, "alas ! what could it have been, if not mercy softened by your prayers, and perhaps those of my late mother ?"

That illustrious lady had been a model of piety to the court and the city. After some years of marriage, of which the young duke was the only issue, she had lost her husband, whom she survived only a few months. When she was dying, she had sent for her son, and spoken to him in nearly the following words : "I leave you, my son, a great name and great wealth, but I exhort you less to preserve one and the other than to maintain the title of Christian. Now, I foresee dangers for you, my son. Into what excesses, perchance, you may be seduced by the brilliant fortune of which you become master. I die ; alas ! too soon for you. The will of the Lord be done ! I leave you under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and I entreat her to be to you as a mother. My son, if you preserve some recollection of me during the rest of your life, if you would now give some proof of affection to the tenderest of mothers, who, dying, regrets life only on account of you, promise me the only thing I am about to ask of you. It will cost you little : it is to recite the chaplet every day."

"I cheerfully promised," added the young nobleman, after he had given these details to his confessor, "and I have regularly done what my mother so earnestly requested. I confess it has been, for ten years, my only

act of religion." The confessor doubted not that it was a special protection of the august Mother of God, which had drawn down upon his penitent that astonishing mercy of the Lord. He exhorted him to redouble his confidence in his benefactress, remained with him till his death, and received his last sigh, breathed forth in the same spirit of penance.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Stanislaus.)

Ask of her, morning and evening, at your rising and at your lying down, prostrate in spirit at her feet, her maternal benediction. Such was the practice of Saint Stanislaus.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Ephrem.)

O Mary, full of grace, enlighten my understanding, loosen my tongue, open my lips, that I may sing thy praises, and, especially, that angelical salutation so worthy of thee. "Hail, O miracle," the greatest that has ever existed in the world! O paradise of delight! port of safety! fountain of grace! mediatrix between God and man! Hail! Amen.

FORTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN DELIVERS US FROM TEMPTATION WHEN WE INVOKE HER.

“She is terrible as an army set in array.”—*Cant.*, chap. vi.

WE read in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, that the Lord, in cursing the serpent, after the fall of our first parents, said to him: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and she shall crush thy head.” That woman, victorious over the infernal powers, was Mary, who, by her profound humility, and her incomparable purity, overcomes Lucifer, chaining him in the depth of the abyss. She is the Queen of heaven and the terror of hell, as Erasmus calls her (*salve infernorum formido*); and when the devil ventures to tempt the servants of that great sovereign, she defends them, she protects them, she delivers them from the temptations wherewith they are assailed by the enemy of man’s salvation. But to prove this truth, and animate ourselves to invoke Mary when we are tormented by the attacks made upon us by that malignant spirit, let us open the holy books and make ourselves acquainted with the glorious titles which they attribute to that illustrious protectress.

It is said in Exodus, that the Lord conducted his people through the desert by a pillar of cloud during the day, and a pillar of flame by night. Now, that pillar, which was by turns flame and cloud, was a figure of Mary, and the double office which she unceasingly fills towards us. A beneficent cloud, she intercepts the too

ardent rays of the Sun of Justice; a terrible fire, she repels the demon who continually prowls around us like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us. "But even," says Saint Bonaventure, "as wax melts before a great fire, so the spirits of darkness remain without strength and without power against the souls that have a tender devotion to Mary, and who, in temptations, have recourse to her,—for the numerous squadrons of an armed enemy are not so much feared, as the powers of hell fear the effects of Mary's protection, which puts them all to flight."

In the old law, when the Israelites went out to battle, they took with them the Ark of the Covenant. When they were on the point of giving battle, they had orders to hold it raised up in presence of the enemy; and when it was uplifted, Moses cried aloud: "Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered."

But that Ark, in presence of which the enemies of the people of God took flight, and which worked so many miracles, was nothing else than a very faint image of Mary, whose invocation alone makes us obtain more victories over the enemies of our salvation than we could gain over earthly enemies with the shields of the valiant and the arms of the strong. It is also known that the palm is the emblem of victory; hence the Church applies to Mary those words of Ecclesiasticus: "I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades."

If, from the figures which foreshadow the victories obtained by the servants of Mary over the enemies of salvation, we pass to the expressions used by the Holy Ghost more sensibly to mark her triumphs, we shall see that he makes his divine Spouse to say: "As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor." (*Eccles. xxiv.*)

But what connection can there be between the Blessed Virgin's protection of those who, in temptations, claim its effects, and a young vine which sheds a sweet odor? A very great one. "For even as venomous serpents avoid flowering vines," so, says Saint Bernard, "the devils, those serpents full of malice and venom, are forced to depart from those happy souls which exhale the sweet and wholesome odor of devotion to Mary."

Richard of Saint Lawrence gives a charming explanation of those words in the Proverbs: "The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils." (*Prov. xxxi.*) He applies that passage to Mary, who is represented by the strong woman. Her husband is the Man-God, whose heart she entirely possesses.

Now Mary, he says, snatches at every moment from the devil his prey, by protecting and delivering the souls that he would fain seduce into his snares. She snatches them from him to give them over to Jesus Christ, whose kingdom she peoples, enriching it with the spoils already counted on by the infernal monster, who is like that enemy mentioned by Job, who takes advantage of the darkness of the night to enter into the house, but flees in terror when the dawn begins to appear. "So," says Saint Bonaventure, "if the thief of hell invades a soul under cover of the darkness of ignorance, and that the grace and mercy of Mary come to shine on that poor soul, he immediately takes flight and abandons his prey!" Such is the dominion which the Lord gives Mary over the spirits of the abyss, that she dispels them much more quickly than the dawn of day dispels the shades of night. "Yes," says Saint Bridget, in her Revelations, "as often as the devils dare to attack a man who im-

plores the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, at the least sign that she makes them they fly away all trembling; for the torments of hell, a thousand times redoubled, are less bitter to them than this proof of the terrible power of Mary." There is no servant of that good Mother who may not exclaim, with Saint John Damascene: "O holy Virgin, my hope in thee renders me invincible! Strong in thy powerful assistance, I will pursue my enemies, opposing to them thy protection as an invulnerable shield." And even as every knee bends at the name of Jesus, so all likewise bend and ought to humble themselves before that of Mary. "That holy and formidable name," says Saint Thomas Aquinas, "is to the demons like the thunderbolt which strikes mortals down and deprives them of consciousness." Hence what splendid victories have been gained over the tempting spirit by the servants of Mary, who have had recourse to her! It was by that means Saint Anthony of Padua and the blessed Henry Suzon were victorious; and Saint Anselm relates having seen many persons, who, having had recourse to the holy name of Mary in their dangers, were speedily delivered by her invocation.

"Ah!" exclaims Saint Alphonso Liguori, "why then do not all Christians have recourse to Mary in temptation?" Even the most hardened sinner does not invoke her in vain, if he sincerely desires to reform. The demons leave him as soon as they hear him utter that beautiful name of Mary, as she herself revealed to Saint Bridget.

Let us use these means: they are as easy as they are efficacious. Let us not wait until sin enters into our soul, but oppose to it, as an insurmountable barrier, the name of *Mary*.

She has promised to come to our aid, and to deliver us. She will not deceive us, she will keep her promise, for she is called by the Church a faithful Virgin. It is for us not to fail in invoking her as often as we shall be tempted.

EXAMPLE.

*An Old Man consoled and delivered from his temptations,
by having recourse to Mary.*

A recluse of Mount Olivet had in his cell an image of Mary, before which he recited many prayers. The devil, unable to endure that devotion, tormented him continually by temptations against purity. The poor old man seeing that neither his prayers nor his mortifications delivered him from that torment, one day asked the demon, "Why is it that you will not leave me one moment at rest?" The demon replied: "The torments I inflict upon you are trifling, in comparison with those which you cause me to suffer. Swear to keep my secret, and I will tell you what you are to omit, if you would have me leave you in peace." The recluse having done so, "I want you to look no more at the image you have in your cell." The good old man, perplexed by such an answer, went to consult the Abbot Theodore, who told him that he was not bound by his oath, and that he should continue to recommend himself to Mary before her image, as he was wont to do. The recluse obeyed, and the demon found himself confused and vanquished.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Teresa.)

Never commence any action without offering it to the Blessed Virgin, and asking her assistance. Saint

Teresa, when elected prioress of the monastery of Avila, commenced the duties of her office by laying the keys of the convent at the feet of an image of the Blessed Virgin, which she had had removed to her place in the choir.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Epiphanius.)

Assist me, O Mother of God, O Mother of Mercy, during the whole course of my life! Keep far from me the attacks of my enemies at the moment of my death! Preserve my poor soul, and dispel the dark shadows of the demons at the dreadful judgment. Preserve me from eternal damnation. Finally, place me in the number of the saints, and make me enter into the glory of thy Son, and into the inheritance of the children of God. Amen.



FORTY-THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.



INSTRUCTION: THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS, BECAUSE SHE MAKES THEM RECOVER THAT OF GRACE.

"I am a wall . . . I am become in his presence as one finding peace."—*Cant.*, chap. viii.

FOLLOWING the Church we cannot go astray, and it is she who teaches us that Mary is the way by which we may recover the grace of God,—calling her, first, our life, *vita nostra*, and afterwards saying to God himself: "O

God most merciful, be thou the support of our weakness, and enable us to rise from our sins, by the intercession of the blessed Virgin Mary, whose memory we honor !” Elsewhere she borrows the words of the Holy Ghost to put them in the mouth of Mary, whom she makes say, “He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.” (*Prov.*, chap. viii.) It is also in that sense that she applies to her those other words of the *Canticle of Canticles*, “I am a wall . . . I am become in his presence as one finding peace.”

After that, we must not be surprised if the holy Fathers and all the men most eminently distinguished in the Catholic Church by their wisdom and their learning, have all loudly proclaimed that Mary was the only means which God had given us to enable us to return to grace and peace with him; and that in that sense she was truly our life, the cause of our joy, the port of our salvation, and, after God, all our hope.

It is not, then, without reason that Saint Bernard tells us to seek grace, but to seek it only through Mary; for, if we have had the misfortune of losing it, we can only find it again through her. It is she who has found it, and it is she who is charged with restoring it to us. That is what the Angel Gabriel declares to the Blessed Virgin when he announces to her the great mystery of the Incarnation : “Fear nothing, O Mary, for thou hast found grace.” But how are we to reconcile these words with those which precede them : “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee !” Cardinal Hugo replies, “It is not for herself, but simply for those who have lost it that Mary has found grace.” She was conceived in grace, and was never deprived of it; that is not found which is already possessed. It is only for us, then, that Mary

finds grace, since she has no need of it for herself. Yes, she has found it, and she finds it as often as she will: she is the depositary of it, according to the language of the Fathers of the Church; she is its treasurer; she is its dispenser; it depends but on ourselves to receive it in the greatest abundance. Let us seek it, then, and seek it through Mary.

Full of these sentiments, the Saints have given her the titles best calculated to heighten in her that great prerogative; titles which are at the same time for us motives of the sweetest confidence. Some have called her the *hope of the guilty*, because she alone obtains for them the forgiveness of God (*Saint Lawrence Justinian*); others have named her the *ladder of sinners*, because she alone extends a hand to those who have fallen into the abyss of sin, from which she draws them to raise them again towards God (*St. Bernard*): these call her the *guarantee of reconciliation* and the *pledge of pardon* (*Saint Andrew of Crete*); those assure us that *she is a privileged asylum*, in which all who take refuge escape eternal shipwreck (*St. Bernard*). Others, in fine, whilst professing all these sentiments, exclaim, in the name of all sinners, "Hail, O Mary, Mother of God and our Mother! Dispenser of all graces, sublime ornament of our Church, pray unceasingly to Jesus for us, to the end that, by thy intercession, we may obtain at the day of judgment the forgiveness of our sins and eternal glory!" (*St. Chrysostom*.) To these terms, so noble and so touching, the sacred authors add the comparisons and the figures which the holy Scripture uses to establish Mary's title of *pacificator* and *reconciler* between God and man. Saint Bernard says that she is justly compared to the dawn, because that, as the dawn is the end of the night and

the beginning of the day, so the coming of Mary announced to the world the end of the night of sin, and the beginning of the day of grace; and what the birth of Mary did once for the world in general, universal devotion renews daily in particular; for scarcely does this devotion begin to appear in a soul, ere it drives thence the darkness of vice, and enlightens that soul with the light of virtue.

It is related in the Life of Saint Gertrude, that she one day had a vision, in which she perceived Mary with her cloak thrown open, and beneath it went for shelter, lions, leopards, bears, tigers, and all sorts of ferocious beasts; that Mary did not drive them away; on the contrary, she caressed them all with her hand, and received them with the utmost commiseration. By that the Saint understood that all sinners, even those who have wallowed in every species of crime, may obtain their pardon by means of Mary, and return through her into favor with the Lord.

Let us conclude, then, with Saint Germain, "that the intercession of Mary gives life, and that her protection insures immortality."

"Be not discouraged," exclaims the devout Bernardine de Buste, "be not discouraged, O sinner! even though your iniquities were innumerable. Have recourse still to Mary, whose liberal hands are full of graces; who is far more desirous to grant them to you than you can be to receive them. All nations call her *blessed*, because sinners owe to her the pardon of their sins, and the just the gift of their perseverance."

EXAMPLE.

Criminal habits destroyed by constant recourse to Mary.

A young person who had already passed several years in a disorderly way, groaned nevertheless in secret for the shameful chains with which she had loaded herself, as much through poverty as through passion. One day when she was much occupied with the misery of her criminal state, she was surprised to see her companion in vice enter the room, with downcast eyes, and an air of confusion, a pocket-book in his hand, and address her in these words: "We have lived long enough in vice; we must renounce it, and think of penance. I am going to retire from the world to think of it; I advise you to do the same: in this pocket-book you will find enough to furnish you with an honest living in retirement for the rest of your days; go, then, and restore to God the heart you had given to the creature." The young person, at first astounded, then deeply affected, felt her chains broken on the instant; and, her heart touched with contrition and gratitude for a God who thus facilitated her conversion, she hastened to seek a spiritual guide to conduct her in the new life of penance which she was resolved to lead, and did lead in fact, the rest of her days. Her confessor, surprised by so happy a change, asked her whether she had not preserved some practice of piety in her criminal life? She replied, "that she had never failed to hear Mass every Saturday in honor of the Blessed Virgin, because her mother, on her death-bed, had made her promise to do so." Both, then, understood that the Mother of God had vouchsafed to reward, by such great proofs of kindness, that slight mark of piety towards herself.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Venerable Benedict Labbre.)

Make it your pleasure, your duty even, to assist at the processions and other ceremonies which take place in honor of the most holy Virgin. This practice, observed by all true servants of Mary, is very advantageous. The venerable Benedict Joseph Labbre, never failed to do it. He was from Boulogne, in France, and died holily at Rome.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(Taken from the Paraphrase on her Litany.)

Mother of Grace! it is by thee that a God, the author of all grace, has come down to us; thou art filled with grace, and wert *prevented* from the moment of thy Immaculate Conception; thou art that happy channel by which God vouchsafes to communicate grace to us. Ah! behold how we are bereft of grace by sin; have compassion, then, on our misery, and obtain for us those graces of which we have need. Amen.

 FORTY-FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIFTHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 INSTRUCTION: THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS OUR ADVOCATE WITH GOD.

"All generations shall call me blessed, because he that is mighty hath done great things to me."—*Luke*, chap. i.

It is not without reason that the Church proclaims Mary our advocate, for she truly is so; and she fulfils that office on our behalf with all the zeal, all the gener-

osity, and all the compassion imaginable. Considering the ardor by which that Mother is animated in pleading our cause, Saint Augustine says, that "men have but one advocate in heaven; and, although all the Saints interest themselves in our salvation and intercede for us, nevertheless, the charity of Mary so far exceeds theirs, that it is true to say that she is our only advocate;" and that, according to the beautiful expression of Saint Germain, she cannot be satiated with defending us, protecting us, and praying for us—*non est satiety defensiois ejus*. "Doubtless," says Saint Bernard, "Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men; but because the latter dread the divine Majesty, which is one day to judge them, it was necessary to give them a mediatrix between them and the Mediator himself; and, assuredly, no other was more fitted for that charitable office than the Blessed Virgin, whom we recognize and proclaim the prudent Virgin by excellence. *Virgo prudentissima*, we daily say to her with the Church."

"Jesus Christ," Saint Paul tells us, "ceases not to intercede for us with his heavenly Father, who always hears him favorably, because of the very great respect that is due to him." "And Mary," adds the blessed Amadeus, "is continually present at the throne of divine mercy to ask grace in our behalf." And how should it be otherwise? She sees from the height of heaven all our wants, all our miseries, and, in her tenderness for us, she feels them as though she experienced them herself. It seems to me as though I could hear her say to us what Samuel formerly said to the Israelites: "Far from me be the thought to remain a single moment without praying for you, and asking for you all good things from the Lord." She offers our prayers to him, and, as in

themselves they are inefficacious, Mary supports them by her own merits, and gives them all that they want to render them fruitful. She does not fear to approach the throne of the King of kings. Like the humble and charitable Esther of old, who braved death for the safety of her people, Mary, if I might venture to say so, would brave in heaven the effects of the wrath of divine justice, could they be turned against her, to plead our cause and obtain our pardon." It is in that point of view that Saint Bonaventure calls her the wise Abigail. That woman, as it is related in the third book of Kings, knew how by her prudent words to appease King David, when, irritated against Nabal, he was ready to punish him for his insolence. David blessed her, and thanked her for having prevented him from taking vengeance into his own hands. Even so does Mary with God in heaven; and by means of her sweet and wise prayers, she knows so well how to appease the anger of the Lord, that he blesses her himself, and seems, so to say, to thank her for preventing him from being angry with us, and for delivering us from the fate we had so justly merited.

Woe to us then, if, having an advocate so compassionate, so generous, and so powerful, we shall cease to pray to her to interest herself for us. Let us remember what she herself said to the blessed sister Vellani, that, after the title of *Mother of God*, there is none which she considers more glorious to her than that of Advocate of Sinners. Accordingly, Saint Bonaventure does not hesitate to affirm, that "one of the great prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin is that of being all-powerful with him who is all-powerful, and of using her omnipotence only in favor of sinners who claim its effects. "For," he immediately adds, "what would her omnipotence benefit

us, did she not employ it in our favor? No," he concludes, "let us fear nothing. Let us, on the contrary, thank the Lord that the most powerful, and even the only truly powerful one amongst all the Saints, is likewise the most zealous, the most tender, and the most generous advocate that can be imagined. Ah yes, doubtless, it is Mary who, after Jesus Christ, has more solicitude, more mercy, more tenderness, more charity, more love, and more goodness for us than all others! It is she who sustains us in our troubles, who consoles us in our afflictions, who relieves us in our necessities, and whose zeal impels her to defend us against all our enemies. She combats for us, and then makes us enjoy all the fruits of her victories." "That powerful advocate," says Richard of Saint Lawrence, "is so prudent, so skilful in the defence of the unfortunate, that her Son can condemn none of the criminals whom she defends or protects." Hence Saint John the geometrician calls her the Law of Absolution. "*Salve*," says he to Mary, "*salve jus dirimens lites*."

All those sentiments are exactly conformable to what we know of the Blessed Virgin, to all that we experience of her, and to all that we desire she should be for us. And it is to confirm us in these sentiments in regard to the Queen of heaven, our divine Advocate, that Saint Bernard tells us: "Go through the holy Gospels, read with attention all that the sacred authors tell us of Mary, and if you find one single word, one single trait that savors of harshness, or even of severity, I permit you, then, to fear her approach. But no, you will find in her only sweetness, affability, bounty, clemency, and mercy, —in fine, all the qualities proper to inspire you with the greatest confidence in her assistance; and you will feel

yourself, so to say, in spite of you, led to claim it in the divers situations in which Providence may permit you to be placed, in this valley of tears and misery." Saint Thomas of Villanova says: "Dry up your tears, you who are in tribulation. Take courage, you who are fearful and pusillanimous, the powerful Virgin who is the Mother of your Judge and your God is also the advocate of mankind;—the skilful advocate, who knows all the means of appeasing the Lord; the universal advocate, who sends no applicant away from her without having received some consolation."

EXAMPLE.

Remarkable instance of the protection and mercy of Mary.

In the town of Cesena there were two friends, who were noted sinners. One of them, named Bartholomew, preserved, in the midst of his vices, the devotion of daily reciting the *Stabat Mater*. One day, as he was reciting that prayer, it seemed to him that he was in a lake of fire with his companion. The Blessed Virgin, touched with compassion, extended her hand to him, drew him out of the fire, and advised him to ask pardon of Jesus Christ, who showed that he granted him that grace at the prayer of his Mother. After that vision, tidings came to Bartholomew that his friend had been shot dead, and he thereby knew that his vision was true. Wherefore it was, that having renounced the world, he became a Capuchin; and after leading a most penitent life, he died in the odor of sanctity.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Aloysius Gonzaga.)

To your customary prayers to Mary, add nine "Hail Marys" on her festival days, in order to honor by that divine salutation the nine months during which she carried Jesus Christ in her chaste womb. Saint Aloysius Gonzaga never failed in this practice, by which is obtained from Mary the grace of not being ungrateful.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By the devout Chancellor Gerson.)

O Mary, thou art called our Advocate, our Mediatrix, our Queen, because it is through thy hands that God has chosen to give us all his graces. We have recourse, then, to thee! Canst thou reject us? Ah, no! doubtless, since thou hast never refused thy assistance to any who have exposed their wants to thee in all the sincerity of their heart! Full of that confidence, we hope that thou wilt assist us in this world, to the end that we may arrive at the happy end of our pilgrimage. Amen.

FORTY-FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE HOLY VIRGIN IS THE HELP OF ALL
CHRISTIANS.

“She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor.”—*Prov.*, chap. xxxi.

THE whole life of the Blessed Virgin shows how constantly dear to her has been the alleviation of the miseries that surround us ; every thing in her proves to us how justly the Church gives to her the title of Help of Christians ; for we read in the Gospel of St. Luke, that when Mary went to visit Saint Elizabeth, her cousin, she set out in all haste, and that, doubtless, to make us comprehend her eager desire promptly to afford that favored family all the graces and benefits which were to be heaped upon them by her visit. *Maria*, says the sacred text, *abiit in montana cum festinatione* ; and it is to be remarked that, in speaking of her return, nothing is said about haste or diligence, for the simple reason that, in going to the city of Hebron, Mary had benedictions to pour forth upon the family of Zacharias, whereas, returning to Nazareth, she had no new succor to bring thither.

In the sacred phraseology, the word *Ruth* signifies who sees and who hastens ; and Saint Bonaventure maintains that *Ruth*, the wife of Booz, was a figure of Mary. That name perfectly applies to her, since that Mother of Mercy sees our miseries, and hastens to relieve them all. Her

most ardent desire is to do us good, and to dispense to us the treasures of grace of which she is the depository. In that dispensation she makes no delay, so that her generosity equals her promptitude.

The Apostle Saint John says, in his Apocalypse, that *he saw a woman to whom were given two great wings, like those of an eagle*; and, according to the opinion of the interpreters, those two wings signify the *ardent love* by which Mary unceasingly rises towards her God. This opinion is doubtless well founded, and conformable to the idea we should have of the virtues of Mary; but there is a still more consoling explanation given us by the blessed Amadeus: "Those two wings mark the rapid flight, more rapid than that of the seraphim, with which Mary hastens to the succor of her children." "Yes," replies Navarinus, "this explanation is just, since that help of Christians not only hastens, but flies to relieve us, after the example of her divine Son, who, like a giant, hastens on his way with great strides to arrive the sooner at his object, that is to say, to make us enjoy the benefits which he came on earth to bring us." Mary's desire to console us in our miseries is so immense, so vehement, that scarcely have we resolved to address ourselves to her mercy, when she has already heard our prayers, and often anticipates them. This is what Wisdom seems to indicate to us by those words which the Church applies to the Blessed Virgin: "She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them." (*Wisdom*, chap. viii.)

If Mary is already inclined and prompt to aid us, even when we do not pray to her, what may we not then expect from her when we lay our miseries before her, and beseech her to deliver us from them, or, at least, to give

us strength to bear their burden with resignation to the Divine will?

Ah! let us not doubt for a single moment the eager zeal which the Blessed Virgin employs in soothing our pains. It would be an insult to her love and her tenderness.

"Sooner will heaven and earth be destroyed," says Blossius, "than Mary fail to aid those who invoke her." Let us esteem ourselves happy to have, in this valley of tears, a help so powerful and so generous! What should become of us without that great resource, amid the miseries which everywhere surround us? It is Mary who not only treats us favorably, loves us tenderly, protects us effectually, but who also seeks us ardently, to heap good things upon us! It is to engage us to correspond with the charitable dispositions of our august benefactress that the Church, ever animated by the spirit of God, urges us to apply unceasingly to her, by keeping us faithful to the pious practices which she has established or authorized to honor her more specially, the observance of which tends only to merit for us a greater abundance of grace! It is to attain that end, so advantageous to us, that she has decreed to Mary a particular worship; it is with that view that she has established a great number of feasts in the course of the year, and that she every week consecrates a day in her honor, the better to inculcate to her children that they cannot too often invoke their divine protectress, and have recourse to her bounty. The Church desires that all those who recite the divine Office shall address each time a special invocation to the Blessed Virgin, forming a tribute of particular homage to her. She ordains, at the same time, that all Christians, without distinction,

shall salute her three times a day by the recitation of a prayer which reminds her of the foundation of her greatness, and ourselves of the foundation of our hope and of our consolation. Let us, then, follow in the spirit of that holy Church, in all that she practises and causes her children to practise, to inspire them with feelings of confidence in frequent recourse to the bounties of the divine Mother. Behold how eager she is to claim her suffrages, and to interest her in our favor by humble supplications. In plagues and in public calamities, she prays, and causes her children to pray; she invites them to make novenas; she herself makes processions in honor of the Mother of God; she visits her oratories, her images; she carries her statues in triumph. In fine, she neglects nothing that can enhance her glory and remind us of her greatness, of her power, and especially of her bounty and her mercy, in order to prove to us that she is justly called the *Help of Christians*.

EXAMPLE.

A family delivered from Famine and Dishonor by having recourse to Mary.

The Bishop of Monopoli, in his first book, chapter 17, relates that a noble and virtuous widow, who was at the same time very poor, had two daughters of rare beauty. They were obliged to labor continually with their hands, but the gain was very small. They could scarcely make enough to live, and could not make even a passably decent appearance. As they were, on that account, obliged to keep within doors, and not appear in public, they spent the festival days saying their beads before an image of the Blessed Virgin, which served as their ora-

tory. The mother was overwhelmed with grief, not so much for the poverty which she endured, as on account of the dangers which the beauty, the condition, and the age of her daughters made her apprehend for them. She felt herself inspired to take the Blessed Virgin for a mother, and to place them under her protection. She therefore took them to the chapel of the Holy Rosary, and said to the Blessed Virgin: "Holy Virgin, I give you these two maidens: take care to provide for them; to discharge, in their behalf, the office of a good mother. Behold them! they kiss your sacred hands, from which they expect all their succor." They then retired to their own house, and continued to say their Rosary with more fervor, which obliged the Virgin to bless their labors, and to furnish them not only with the means of living comfortably, but also of dressing according to their condition. Soon they were able to leave the house, and appear at church. Their neighbors, remarking the change, at first thought that it could not be from their labor, but from some infamous connection, and that they sold their virtue to some persons who took care to supply them with the means of maintaining and clothing themselves. These whispers were not so secretly circulated but that they reached the ears of these virtuous girls, and they were more afflicted by that disgrace than by the poverty they had endured. They again had recourse to their patroness, and besought her to efface that obloquy as she had removed their poverty. Behold what followed. Being one day in church, at a grand solemnity, whilst all the people were assembled to assist at the offices of the day, two beautiful crowns of roses were seen to fall from above, on the heads of these two sisters, although it was not the season for flowers. All

present admired the prodigy, and at once recognized their innocence. The persons who had pronounced rash judgments upon them repented of it, and knowing that all these favors had been bestowed upon the maidens through their devotion to the holy Rosary, they hastened to embrace it, and derived great profit therefrom. Two noble and wealthy men married the sisters, and lived peaceably and holily with them in marriage.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY..

(By Saint Stanislaus Kostka.)

Kiss, and press to your heart, the chaplet, or medal, or an image of the Blessed Virgin. These marks of affection are infinitely pleasing to the Mother of God, and bring down her graces upon us.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernardine of Sienna.)

O woman, blessed amongst all women! O Mary, thou art the honor of mankind, and the safety of nations! Thou art the dispenser of all graces, the ornament and the glory of the Church! Thou art the model of the just, the consolation of the Saints, and the source of our happiness! There is all that we know how to say in thy praise. We intreat thee, then, O Mother of goodness, to supply our insufficiency, and to bless our labor! Imprint thy love in all hearts, so that, after having honored and loved thy Son upon earth, we may go to praise and bless him eternally in heaven. Amen.

FORTY-SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE COMFORT OF THE AFFLICTED.

“They encompassed me on every side, and there was no one that would help me. I remembered thy mercy. . . . how thou deliverest them that wait for thee.”—*Eccles.*, chap. xl.

WHEN the Church invokes the Blessed Virgin, under the title of *Comfort of the Afflicted*, it is because she daily witnesses the happy effects which her children experience from the merciful assistance of Mary. Saint Epiphanius calls her “full of eyes, that she may be the better able to discover and relieve our wants.”

In fact, that good Mother is always engaged in offices of charity; she employs herself for all men in general. Her compassion excepts none; and it suffices that we are in trouble, to be sure that she is ready to assist us. She it is who pours the balm of comfort on our wounds, and the wine of strength into our souls, to enable us to support with resignation the cross which it pleases Providence to send us. And it is in that sense that Saint Bonaventure applies to her the words of Booz to Ruth: “Be thou blessed, daughter of the Lord, because thy last kindness hath exceeded the first.” By this application the Saint would have us understand that, if Mary’s compassion for the unhappy was great while she was still on earth, it is infinite, now that she is in heaven. There she better knows our miseries, and can relieve them more effectually; for during her life, she, occupying but a

small space, saw only those ills which immediately surrounded her, whereas now she casts her eyes over the entire universe, of which she is the Queen, and of which she hears all the unhappy whom she bears in her maternal bosom. It is for that reason that she is compared to the sun, because as no one in the world can escape the light of that brilliant star, so all afflicted Christians have their share in the beneficent rays of Mary's charity. Her ardor in succoring the unfortunate is continual, universal, and immense; and it is to express that triple thought, that Saint Bonaventure says to her: "Thou hast so much care over the afflicted, that one might think thou hadst no other desire than to relieve them, no other occupation than that of consoling them." Mary, by her solicitude in procuring for us all the assistance of which we have need, is like those angels of whom mention is made in Holy Writ, who continually ascend and descend between heaven and earth. So it is with the Comfort of the Afflicted. She descends from heaven to shed her consolations on the earth, and she ascends thither to represent to the Lord the need we have of her assistance; so that she is incessantly occupied with us, in heaven and on earth. And it is doubtless this thought that Saint Andrew of Avelino means to express, when making use of a familiar but very significant expression, to indicate Mary's zeal in assuaging our afflictions, he calls her the "busy one of Paradise;" and that to make us understand that she embraces all our wants, and is constantly occupied with them. For, like a good mother who watches assiduonsly over her child, not only when its situation demands all her cares, but also when it is in danger of falling, Mary delivers us from evils, and often preserves us from them.

The Lord is, doubtless, impenetrable in his designs, and no one, says Saint Paul, can be made a sharer in his adorable secrets. Nevertheless, seeing that he made Mary pass through all the states in which a creature can be on earth, may we not conclude that it was in order that she might know all the situations in which the unhappy are to be found? So, Saint Germain says that "in Mary the slave finds his ransom, the infirm his health, the afflicted his consolation, and the sinner his pardon." That Mother of goodness and of mercy has so great a desire to do us good when we are unhappy, that, following the opinion of Saint Bonaventure, "she feels as much offended when we ask her for nothing, as when we insult her by despising her in her worship and its practices." Let us ask her, then, to relieve us in our pains, in our wants, in our ills, however great they may be; and let us rest perfectly assured that she will come to our aid by means unknown to our feeble intelligence, but which, in her divine hands, will make us arrive at ends to which we should have never dared to pretend, the results of which will be infinitely more advantageous than all those which we ourselves should have desired.

And how could it be otherwise? Is it not written in the Holy Books that the threshold of mercy was to precede redemption? And what is that threshold of mercy if it be not our generous Consoler, since it is through her that all men have access to God, who is the Father of all consolation and of all mercy? The Abbé Guenée represents Jesus Christ as saying, in speaking of the Blessed Virgin: "In thee I have set up the throne of my mercy, and through thee I will grant the prayers of mortals." Such, also, is the sentiment of the Church, who, addressing Mary, prays her to "turn towards us her

eyes of mercy." Saint Gertrude says, that "this good Mother can, at her pleasure, turn the merciful glance of her divine Son upon all the wretched who invoke her."

"O Mother of grace," let us say to her, then, with the Abbé Adam, "thy pity is equal to thy power. When hast thou not had compassion upon the unhappy? When hast thou failed to assist them?"

Here is a very beautiful passage on this subject, extracted from the "Analyzed Sermons" of Father Beauregard, a celebrated preacher of the last century: "The Lord," says he, "formerly proposed to the prophet Achaz to ask him for a sign in heaven, on earth, or in hell. Achaz refused to do it, saying, 'I will not tempt the Lord my God.' And I," adds the minister of the Lord's word, addressing his hearers, "I ask of you to show me—unknown in heaven and on earth it is—an instance of a single man, whether righteous or sinful, great or small, rich or powerful, who, in his misery and in his necessities, in his pains and in his tribulations, in his difficulties and dangers, addressed himself to Mary, and was not assisted. Ah, no! doubtless, none such can be found."

Finally, we may say here what the great Bossuet said in another sense: "The entire universe, created for the glory of God, has become an immense temple in which appear on all sides the august monuments of the compassion, the bounty, the mercy, and the charity of the generous Comfort of the Afflicted."

EXAMPLE.

Saint Francis de Sales delivered from a great trouble by addressing himself to Mary.

Saint Francis de Sales had a happy experience of his recourse to Mary. We read in his life that, at the age

of seventeen years, being at Paris, where he was completing his studies, he was afflicted with a horrible temptation of despair. The Lord, to try him, and to render him more and more worthy of his love and of his favors, permitted the devil to persuade the holy young man that all he was doing for God was useless, since his reprobation was written in the eternal decrees. At the same time God, hiding himself from him, left him in a state of darkness and dryness, which rendered him insensible to the most consoling thoughts of the Divine goodness; so that in the midst of his interior desolation, and tormented by the fear of hell, Saint Francis de Sales lost his appetite, his sleep, his health, so that he became an object of compassion to all those who saw him. During this terrible tempest, the Saint had no other thought but that of despair. He could only utter words of despondency. "So, then," said he, "I shall be eternally deprived of the grace of my God, who in the past has shown himself so amiable and so sweet to me. O Love! O Beauty! to which I should have devoted all my affections, I must henceforth expect, then, only thy rigor! O Virgin Mother of God, loveliest of the daughters of the heavenly Jerusalem, never shall I, then, behold thee in Paradise. Ah! if it be not given me to contemplate the beauty of thy countenance, at least permit me not to be condemned to blaspheme and curse thee in hell." Such were, then, the tender sentiments of that afflicted heart, burning with love of God and his holy Mother. The temptation lasted a month; but at length it pleased the Lord to deliver him from it, and it was by means of Mary, to whom the Saint had already vowed his virginity. Returning home one evening, he entered a church, and saw hanging on the wall a tablet, on which was

written the prayer of Saint Bernard, "Remember, O pious and tender Virgin," &c. He prostrated himself before the altar of the Mother of God; he fervently recited that prayer; renewed his vow of chastity, and promised the Blessed Virgin that he would daily recite the chaplet in her honor. "O my Sovereign," said he again, "be my advocate with thy Son, to whom I dare not have recourse. If I am to be so unhappy in the other world as not to love my Lord, obtain for me, at least, to love him with all my might in this." After which he threw himself into the arms of the divine mercy, entirely resigned to the will of God.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Charles Borromeo and Saint Francis de Sales.)

Recite devoutly the Rosary or Chaplet. The devotion of the Rosary was inspired to Saint Dominick by the Blessed Virgin, who declared to him that it would be a celestial rain which should produce great fruit in souls. This devotion has been that of all true servants of Mary, and especially that of Saint Francis de Sales and of St. Charles Borromeo, who every day recited the Chaplet on their knees.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Alphonso Liguori.)

[Pius VIII., by his Rescript of the 12th July, 1816, attached to this prayer a hundred days' indulgence, applicable to the souls in purgatory.]

O Mary, thou who so ardently desirest to see thy divine Son loved, if thou lovest me, obtain for me a tender love for that adorable Saviour. Thou who obtainest whatsoever thou wilt, hear me; attach me so to Jesus that I

may never cease to love him. Obtain for me, also, a great love for thee, who art the most amiable of creatures and the most beloved of God. Amen.

FORTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE PRACTICE OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE SOURCE OF ALL GOODS, SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL.

"All good things come to me together with her."—*Wis.*, chap. vii.

To be thoroughly convinced that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is the source of all goods, spiritual and temporal, whether for time or for eternity, it must be remembered that Mary is all our hope, and that it is only through her we can obtain from God all of which we have need. Hope is the foundation of confidence, and that foundation rests on Mary, who makes us participate in the graces she dispenses.

In the first place, the Holy Scripture calls Mary not only our hope, but the mother of holy hope; which is as much as to say, that without Mary there is no hope, or that if there be, it is not true, because it will not be holy. Next, the Church salutes Mary as our only hope. Finally, all the Saints have recognized and honored her under that title. Saint Epiphanius says to her: "Hail, protectress of sinners, bulwark of Christians, and health of the world!" Saint Thomas of Villanova calls her "our only refuge, our asylum, our support;" and Saint

Bernard seems to give us the reason of all these titles, when he says, "O man! contemplate the counsel of God and the decree of his mercy! In the hands of Mary has been deposited the whole price of the redemption of mankind." Now, if Mary dispenses the price of redemption, she also dispenses the merits of Jesus Christ, and, by a necessary consequence, all the graces, all the favors, and all the benefits which are the fruit of the blood of the Man-God. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is, therefore, the source of all the benefits we can enjoy in time, but especially in eternity; because Mary will certainly never fail to favor, to bless all those who regard her as their mistress, who serve her as their queen, who invoke her as their only advocate, and who confide in her as their good and tender mother.

In order to imbue ourselves thoroughly with this consoling truth, let us hear the Holy Ghost putting himself in the mouth of Mary those words, which we read in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: "I love them that love me; and they that in the morning early watch for me shall find me. With me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice, that I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures." And in the 24th chapter of Ecclesiasticus it is said (it is still Mary who speaks): "Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits, for my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honey-comb."

All the Saints have spoken this language. Saint Iræneus asks why was not the Incarnation accomplished without the consent of Mary; and he replies, "Because God willed that she should be the principle of all goods in the law of grace." The learned Idiot adds: "All the goods, all the graces, all the succors that men have re-

ceived and shall receive from God, even until the end of the world, they shall have received through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin."

Finally, Saint Anthony of Padua applies to the Blessed Virgin these words of Wisdom : "All good things come to us with her;" and he adds : "He who has found, that is to say, who embraces her devotion, and is faithful to the pious practices it presents to us, has found all grace, all virtue, because there is nothing that he cannot obtain by her means."

Who, in fact, has not received some favors through the intercession of Mary? How many proud have found humility, through devotion to her; how many passionate and irritable, mildness; how many blind, light; how many avaricious, detachment from riches; how many libertines, love of virtue; how many sinners, their conversion; how many just, final perseverance! Those are for the goods of the soul, which are the most precious; these are for those of the body.

"Calculate, if you can," says the pious author of the *Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis*, "calculate, if you can, how many kingdoms have been consolidated by devotion to Mary! how many empires it has preserved! To how many armies it has given victory! to how many heresies it has put an end! Count, if you can, from how many perils devotion to Mary has delivered those who have practised it! How many sick it has cured! how many men it has delivered from the flames, from the horrors of war, from famine, from pestilence! Reckon, if you can, from the hands of how many of her servants devotion to Mary has caused the fetters to fall! to how many it has opened the gates of prisons! how many reputations blackened by calumny it has re-established!

how many unjust lawsuits it has ended in favor of oppressed innocence! how many have been restored to their possessions at the moment when they had lost all hope of recovering them! How many new Josephs have by that means gone forth from prisons, from dungeons—that is to say, from painful positions into which they had been thrown by the injustice, the calumny, and the wickedness of men—to raise them afterwards to the summit of greatness, wealth, and power! How many Daniels have been snatched from the hands of their persecutors, or rather from the jaws of lions, to become the friends, the confidants of the great ones of this world! How many chaste Susannahs have been saved from dishonor by commending themselves to the Blessed Virgin! How many good and tender mothers have recovered their dear children, when tormented with the fear of dying without being able to embrace them! How many affectionate sons have obtained the consolation of hearing the last words of their parents! What tribulations, what anguish, what evils of all kinds, that beneficent devotion has caused to cease!”

The task would be an endless one were we to undertake to depict all the graces which it has procured for all those who have had the happiness to practise it. Let us, then, attach ourselves to Mary, and to dispose ourselves more efficaciously towards it, let us add, to all that has been already said, the fine passage in which the devout Lausperge represents Jesus Christ as speaking to men, to induce them to honor his holy Mother in a particular manner: “Children of Adam, who live in the midst of so many enemies, and who are subject to so many miseries, honor, with a special devotion, my Mother, who is also yours. I gave her to the world as an example,

and as an impregnable fortress, in order that you may learn from her all virtues, and that she may be your asylum in all tribulations. Let no one dread her; let no one fear to accost her; for I have created her so kind, so merciful, that she cannot repulse those who implore her, nor refuse her aid to those who ask her for it."

EXAMPLE.

A Sinner converted and delivered from prison, and recovers his former station by praying to Mary.

The blessed Alain de la Roche relates that a schoolmaster, after having led the most abominable life, was at length brought to justice, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment on bread and water. He had already been a year in prison, when one of his companions in misfortune surprised him by the air of resignation and even of contentment with which he underwent the same treatment. He asked him "how he could endure, without a murmur, such a sad fate, from which death alone could free him." The poor prisoner having answered that he attributed it to his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the schoolmaster said to him: "If that devotion which you practise so carefully is so advantageous, if it procures so much good for those who embrace it, whence comes it that you are so long in prison, and that you have not regained your liberty by virtue of it?" "For a long time past," was the reply, "it has depended only on myself to enjoy liberty; but I would not and will not accept it, because I am very glad to do a rigorous penance here the rest of my life to satisfy the divine justice, and by this temporal suffering avoid the eternal pains which my crimes have merited. Moreover, I would have reason to

fear that my perverse inclination to vice might make me fall again into the gulf of iniquity from which I am here protected. In this point of view the prison appears sweet to me, the continual fasts on bread and water are agreeable, and I prefer all the hardships of my condition to the pleasures of the world. I owe all these graces to the Blessed Virgin. I will beg of her to procure you the same happiness, and you shall experience her protection if you are devout to her." The schoolmaster allowed himself to be persuaded, and addressed to Mary this prayer: "Holy Virgin, have pity upon thy slave. I solemnly vow that I will serve thee all my life, and I promise to recite thy Rosary every day if thou wilt take me from this prison." The prayer was heard. He obtained his liberty, and availed himself of it to go and settle in another country, where he returned to his former employment. Pupils were given to him, and he inspired them with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, making them say the Chaplet morning and evening. Those children taught the practice to their parents, all of whom religiously observed it. Finally, the schoolmaster entered the order of Saint Dominick; he led a most edifying life, and his death was precious before the Lord.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Clare.)

Pray constantly to the Blessed Virgin to show herself a Mother to you, and to give you grace to show yourself her worthy child. Saint Clare, to obtain that double favor, recited every day a great number of *Aves*; and it was by that pious practice that she merited for herself and her order that special protection by Mary, on which the Church felicitates herself in her Office.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

O Mary, faithful mediatrix of our salvation, may all Christians, according to the beautiful expression of Saint Bernard, honor thee with all their hearts, and with all the strength of their affections. Let us ask for grace, and ask it only through thee, so that all we offer to the Lord may be presented to him through thy sacred hands, and be granted to us under thy gracious auspices. Amen.

FORTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN OBTAINS FOR US FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

“ My abode is in the full assembly of saints.”—*Eccclus.*, chap. xxiv.

THE Church, who neglects nothing to promote the worship of Mary, in order to inspire the greatest confidence in her, applies to her these words of Ecclesiasticus: “ My servants shall not sin, and my admirers shall have eternal life.” Now, not to sin, and to have eternal life, is nothing else than to live in the grace of the Lord, and die in holy perseverance, which is a gift of God,—a gift so great, as defined by the holy Council of Trent, that we cannot merit it of ourselves. But that which is impossible to us, humanly speaking, will become possible, even easy, in faithfully serving the Blessed Virgin.

No doubt, as Saint Paul after Job tells us, the life of

man, and especially of the Christian, is a continual warfare on this earth in the practice of virtue; and to combat it, it is necessary to have courage, in order to go forth victorious from the lists. Well, let us listen to Mary, who declares to us, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, that strength is *her portion*; and we may be assured that she will not fail to impart some of it to those who fight under her glorious standard, by giving them the means of overcoming their enemies. "Mary," says the Church, "is the Tower of David—*Turris Davidica*, as she is called in the Litany; it is built with bulwarks, and a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armor of valiant men." (*Cant.*, iv.) Now, what have those to fear who take refuge within that tower, since they will find there arms that render them invincible against their enemies? And that is precisely what happens to the favored servants of that great queen. Armed with her protection, covered with the mantle of her good-will, they shall be, like herself, more terrible to the demons than an army in battle array is to a timid enemy, who flies before numerous squadrons. "As a plane-tree by the water, in the streets was I exalted." (*Ecclus.*, xxiv.) The Church also applies those words to the Blessed Virgin. "But why compare her to the plane-tree?" "It is," replies Cardinal Hugo, "because the family of the plane-tree has the form of a buckler;" and the Church, in comparing Mary to it, makes us understand that she takes on herself the defence of those who place themselves under her protection, and covers them as if with armor. The explanation of this passage given us by the blessed Amadeus, expresses more clearly the thought of the Church in the sense that she attaches to this text. "The holy Virgin," says he, "is compared to the plane-

tree, because even as that tree spreads its branches in every direction, Mary covers with her refreshing shade all the children of Adam, sheltering them alike against the ardor of the sun and the fury of the tempest. All those who are sheltered beneath that protecting shade, have no dangerous accidents to fear; and therefore it is that the Saints have so great a confidence in Mary. They believed, and certainly with reason, that, protected by her, they would obtain from God final perseverance. They even went so far as to consider those who served her with constancy and fidelity as sure of eternal salvation. On the other hand, they have always considered as almost excluded from the celestial inheritance, those Christians who, having only disgust and indifference for the service of Mary, despise her practices and pay little attention to her worship." Saint Francis Borgia was much afflicted when he saw any of his religious without a particular devotion to the Mother of God. He questioned his novices, from time to time, as to what saint each of them was most devoted to; and when he perceived that it was not to Mary, he did not hesitate to say that they had no vocation for the ecclesiastical state. He was never mistaken; the event always justified his foresight.

Happy, then, a thousand times happy, is he who hears the voice of Mary! who anticipates the day, that is to say, who from his earliest youth labors to find her; who watches at the gate of her mercy, attaching himself constantly to her service, and who honors her in every stage of his existence! She will protect him in all the situations of life; for, according to the beautiful expression of Innocent III., "Mary is called moon during the night, dawn at break of day, and sun during the day." She is the moon for him who is in the night of sin, in

order to enlighten him on his pitiable state. She is the dawn, that is to say, the herald of salvation, for him who, already enlightened, has need nevertheless of strength to arrive at grace. Finally, she is the sun for him who is firm enough in grace, yet needs her aid, in order that he may not fail.

In order to prove how efficacious is the devotion to Mary in obtaining holy perseverance in good, the Abbé Rupert makes a very ingenious reflection upon the parable of the Prodigal Son. "If that profligate son," says he, "had had his mother still, he would never have abandoned the paternal house, or would soon have returned to it;" "meaning, thereby," adds Saint Alphonso Liguori, "that he who is the son of Mary never departs from God, or soon returns to him, if that misfortune befall him."

It is true to say, that if we were really attached to the Blessed Virgin, we should never fall into grievous sin. We would, on the contrary, persevere even till death in the practice of virtue, and die in holy perseverance. That is what we shall find in the service of Mary, whose chains are the chains of salvation; as the Holy Ghost says: "Then shall her fetters be a strong defence to thee, and a firm foundation, and her chain a robe of glory." (*Ecclus. vi.*)

Serving her, we are assured that we shall never be shipwrecked on this stormy sea; for she will walk on the waves with us, protect us there, and preserve us from every tempest. It is not without reason, therefore, that Saint Bernard exclaims: "O Christian man, whoever thou art, thy life on earth is less a march than a perilous voyage! If thou wouldst not be lost, turn not thine eyes from that brilliant star. Keep thy gaze

on the star of Mary. Invoke Mary in occasions of sin, in the anguish of temptation, in doubt, in the midst of danger. Call Mary to thine aid; let her powerful name be ever in thy heart, to inspire it with confidence, and always on thy lips to invoke her. Follow Mary, and thou wilt never go astray; trust in her, and thou wilt never fall into despair. Let her hand sustain thee, and thou shalt not fall; let her protect thee, and thou shalt never have any thing to fear; let her be thy guide, and thou shalt safely reach the port. Finally, let Mary take upon her to support thee, and thou shalt unfailingly arrive at the abode of bliss."

EXAMPLE.

A vicious priest, despairing of his salvation, delivers himself from his criminal habits, and dies holily by placing his confidence in Mary.

Saint Francis Borgia, being at Rome, and already general of the Society of Jesus, there came an ecclesiastic who asked to speak with him. The Saint being very busy at the moment, sent in his place Father Acosta, to whom the ecclesiastic related what we are about to read: "I am," said he, "a priest and a preacher. I have disgraced the sacred habit I wear by the most shameful disorders; and to crown the insults I have offered to the God whom I have offended, I no longer reckoned on his mercy. One day, when I had preached against those obstinate sinners who remain buried in crime, and despair of forgiveness, after the sermon a man came to me to confession, told me word for word my own history, and ended by saying he was damned beyond remission. To acquit myself of my ministerial

duty, I told him that, provided he changed his life, he could promise himself every thing from the mercy of God. Then the man arose, and, standing before me, apostrophized me in these terms: 'And thou who knowest so well how to preach to others, why dost thou not go forth from thy sin, and why dost thou give thyself up to despair? Know that I am an angel sent from heaven to thy assistance: return to the Lord, and he will forgive thee.' Having thus spoken, he disappeared and left me, firmly resolved to profit by his warning. For some days I abandoned my criminal habits, but returned to them on the first occasion. Another time, whilst I was celebrating, Jesus Christ sensibly spoke to me in the Host. 'Why,' said he, 'dost thou treat me so badly; I who treat thee so well?' Upon this, I resolved in earnest to be converted; but I was no stronger this second time than the first, and a new occasion soon drew me into a new relapse.

"But to-day, being alone in my chamber, I saw a young man enter. From a chalice under his cloak he drew a host; then, fixing upon me his eyes, sparkling with anger: 'Do you you recognize,' said he, 'this Lord whom I hold in my hand? Do you remember all the favors he has bestowed upon you? Now, receive the punishment of your ingratitude;' and, seizing a sword which hung from his girdle, he prepared to kill me. I threw myself on my knees, and cried out, 'In the name of Mary, and for her sake, let me live, and I will do penance.' 'You have taken the only means of saying yourself from death,' replied the young man; 'but take care to profit by it, for this mercy is the last for you.' So saying, he left me, and I came immediately to beg of you to receive me among you." Father Acosta

failed not to console and encourage the penitent priest, who, by the advice of Saint Francis Borgia, entered, not the Society of Jesus, but another religious order, in which he persevered in virtue till his death. (*From Bovius, after Liguori.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(Saint Alphonso Liguori, amongst many others.)

Celebrate, or cause to be celebrated, or at least hear Mass, in honor of the Blessed Virgin. The holy sacrifice of the Mass can be offered to God alone; but, says the Council of Trent, it may at the same time be offered to God, to thank him for the graces he has bestowed on the Saints and on his holy Mother, to the end that, in celebrating their memory, they may deign to intercede for us.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Alphonso Liguori.)

I salute thee, O Mary, hope of Christians! Receive the humble petition of a sinner who honors thee and loves thee. It is from thee that I hold life; thou art the hope and the pledge of my salvation. I entreat thee, then, to deliver me from the burden of my iniquities; dispel the darkness of my mind; extirpate from my heart all earthly affections; repress the temptations of mine enemies; and so regulate my life, that, by thine inter-mediation I may, under thy direction, arrive at eternal beatitude. Amen.

FORTY-NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE BLESSED VIRGIN MAKES OUR JOY AND HAPPINESS IN THIS WORLD.

“Thou art the joy of Israel.”—*Judith*, chap. xv.

THE earth is, indeed, a vale of tears; a place of exile; a region of misery. Nevertheless, it is in these tears, it is from the depth of this exile, and in the midst of these miseries, that Mary makes the joy of her servants, by the firm hope that, with her protection, they shall one day be in the number of the elect; their eternal happiness being almost secure in this life, if they continue to serve her faithfully until death. It is morally impossible that one who is truly devout towards Mary should perish for all eternity, as Saint Bernard assures us, *servus Mariæ nunquam perebit*. All the saints have been penetrated with this sentiment, and we find vestiges of it even in holy antiquity. The royal prophet asked of God not to confound him with the impious,—that is to say, with the reprobate, who are the real impious; because, said David, I have loved the beauty of thy house. (*Ps.*, xxv.)

But what is that house of God, become the habitation of the eternal Word, if it be not Mary? as she herself declares, by the mouth of her sacred historian, “He who created me has dwelt in my tabernacle.” (*Eccl.*, chap. iv.) Now, if David hoped to not be confounded with the wicked because he had honored the Blessed Virgin,

prefigured by the Temple, how must it be with a man, a Christian, who makes his chief study not only to honor her, but also to imitate, as far as possible, her sublime virtues ! It is then, and in this sense, that we may truly call devotion to Mary *a letter of enfranchisement*, as Saint Ephrem expresses it.

It is not to be wondered at, then, if the devil declares himself so violently against the servants of Mary, who, after her divine Son, can say to God: "Lord, I have not lost any one of those whom thou hast intrusted to me." Behold why it is that the enemy of mankind makes every exertion to destroy, in souls devoted to that good Mother, the devotion they have for her; and it is not without reason that Mary says she loses none of those who are devoted to her, since the Church applies to her this passage in Ecclesiasticus, chap. xxiv.: "Whosoever listens to me shall not be confounded." Which signifies that he who is attached to the service of Mary is assured of obtaining what he expects, what he desires, and what he asks: for, not to be confounded, is to succeed in one's expectation. But let us take heed: our conduct must prove that we strive to merit the protection of Mary by the virtues we practise; for, in saying that all those who honor the Blessed Virgin are assured of their eternal salvation, we must exclude those rash devotees who, under the pretence of some religious acts which they practise in her honor, believe themselves zealous servants of that good Mother. Such persons deceive themselves, and far from meriting her protection and the effects of her mercy, they merit only the chastisement which they sometimes receive even in this life. We have reference only to those fervent Christians who desire to advance more and more in virtue, and who at the same time offer

a continual homage to the Mother of God. Now, it is very difficult, not to say impossible, that such servants of Mary should be lost for eternity. Such is the opinion of the Fathers of the Church, of an infinity of theologians, of a great number of doctors, and of all the Saints. With such a host of testimony, it must be admitted that there are few truths (those of faith excepted) which present themselves supported by so many authorities, and surrounded by a more imposing array of proofs.

Saint Anthony tells us on this subject: "As it cannot be that those from whom Mary turns away her merciful eyes shall be saved, so it is of all necessity that those who are regarded by her with favor shall have salvation and glory for their inheritance."

Saint Ignatius the Martyr says something still stronger, since he affirms that "a sinner cannot be saved except through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whose infinite mercy obtains salvation for those whom inflexible justice condemns."

Finally, Saint Bonaventure concludes by saying to the Blessed Virgin: "O Mary, but he who honors thee is far from damnation!" Saint John Damascene, adds: "If I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear; for thy devotion is a weapon which God places only in the hands of those whom it is his will to save."

Now, who can doubt of the salvation of the servants of Mary, when Saint Bernard positively assures us that she lacks "neither the power nor the will to save us?" "And how impossible it is," says Saint Anthony, "that the Mother of God should not be heard?" All the Saints had confidence in Mary, and she did not deceive them. Most of them were sinners like us, but thinking that Mary obtained, as Saint Thomas affirms, for a great

number of her servants, even after their death, the suspension of their sentences, they have believed, and, certainly, on good foundation, that if her mercy and her bounty wrought such wonders, she would not refuse them the benefit of their sanctification, and would obtain for them the means of happily attaining thereto. Let us, then, not fear the number of our sins; for if Mary, as Saint Anselm assures us, only prays once for us, we are sure of being exempted from eternal misery. "And who will dare to say," exclaims Richard of Saint Lawrence, "that we shall not find our Judge favorable if we have the Mother of Mercy for us?"

Finally, let us say, with the blessed Henry Suzon: "My soul is in the hands of Mary, and if the Judge will condemn me, the sentence must pass through the hands of that most clement Lady, who will know how to prevent its execution."

Let us have the same hope, let us preserve the same confidence which those true servants of Mary had, and let us thoroughly imbue ourselves with the sentiments of Saint Bonaventure, when he said to Mary, "In thee, O Lady, is my hope: let me not be confounded for eternity!"

EXAMPLE.

A fervent Religious recovers tranquillity by a devout prayer to Mary.

The venerable mother Catherine de Bar, afterwards known as Matilda of the Blessed Sacrament, foundress of the Perpetual Adoration, relates herself the consolations she received from the Blessed Virgin, in her first novitiate at Beugers. Her community was afflicted by an epidemic which speedily rendered both temporal and

spiritual succor so rare, that Mass could scarcely be heard even on Sunday. To crown all, the pious novice fell into a frightful state of interior desolation, aridity, weariness, fear, and disgust of her state. Every thing repelled her from—nothing recalled her to God. She had no one to whom she could open her mind. On the point of giving way, she went to prostrate herself at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, her usual resource. There, melting into tears, she said to her, with tender confidence: "O Blessed Virgin, O my Mother, hast thou, then, conducted me to this place to let me perish? I find here no means of serving God. I know not my duties, and I know not to whom to apply to teach them to me. I am lost if thou dost not vouchsafe to be thyself my mistress, as thou hast hitherto been my mother." This prayer, which she preserved for us, was fully granted. Her troubles disappeared, calm returned, and, what is most remarkable, is, that the Blessed Virgin became herself her mistress, as she had desired. So that she did not fear to say, "It is from the Blessed Virgin I have learned all I know." The same consolations were also granted to her by her holy protectress in her second novitiate in the monastery of Rambevillers, the glory and ornament of which she was. (*From her Life.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary.)

Give alms in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, whilst still a child, kept all the money that was given her for her amusements, in order to distribute it amongst the poor, in honor of the Blessed Virgin. She asked, in return, that each would say a "Hail Mary" for her.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Peter Damian.)

O Mary, all power has been given to thee, on earth and in heaven, and nothing is impossible to thee, for thou canst restore hope to those who have lost it. Deign then, when thou presentest thyself before Jesus Christ who is the author of reconciliation, deign to intercede in my behalf, to the end that I may, under thy auspices, obtain grace to live under thy laws in this world, and enjoy the happiness of beholding thee in the other. Amen.

FIFTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE PATRONESS OF A GOOD DEATH.

“Remember the days of thy low estate, and do thou call upon the Lord and speak to the king for us, and deliver us from death.”—*Esther*, chap. xv.

THE Church, who ceases not to lead her children to devotion to the Blessed Virgin during their life, recommends them to have recourse to her particularly at the terrible moment of death, in order that they may obtain, by her all-powerful mediation with God, the grace of dying in his holy love. With that view it is that she puts in their mouth that touching prayer which she adds to the angelical salutation, and which, by her order, Saint Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, composed in the

Council of Ephesus: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us poor sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

Now, it is not without reason that the Church inspires us with this confidence in Mary, happily to cross, under her protection, the dangerous passage from time to eternity, knowing that that good and tender Mother, who has protected us during this weary exile, will not abandon us, if we only ask her aid, at the auspicious moment of returning to our blessed country. Mary is that true Mother spoken of in the Proverbs, who makes known her tenderness in the time of our adversity, and thereby shows us how much she loves us;—very different from those false worldly friends who caress us, and come to us only when we are happy, and have no need of their assistance; but who keep away from us as soon as we sustain any disgrace, or meet with any reverse in which we might want consolation. "Not so does Mary," says Saint Alphonso Liguori, "when we are in misfortune; and what greater misfortune can we experience, than that which places us in the cruel alternative of losing or saving our souls for all eternity? Mary is our life in this place of our exile; she becomes our sweetness at the hour of death, by procuring it for us calm and happy. From the day when Mary had at once the grief and the consolation of assisting at the last hour of her Son, the chief of the predestined, she obtained the privilege of assisting in like manner all the predestined in that terrible passage."

How frightful, in fact, are the agonies of poor dying sinners, when remorse of conscience, fear of the approaching judgment, and the uncertainty of eternal salvation, combine to fill their souls with trouble and affright!

Hell, says Saint John, in his Apocalypse, having then only a short time to work, redoubles its rage, and makes an extreme effort to seize on its passage that prey which is going to escape it. For that last combat, the devil, who was wont to spread snares for the soul during its pilgrimage, does not content himself with coming alone to the charge, but calls to his aid innumerable legions of the infernal spirits.

"Their abode," says the prophet Isaiah, "will then be filled with serpents;" but if Mary comes to appear, the powers of hell can do nothing against the soul of which they are in pursuit. Their efforts are vain. Her very name puts them to flight; and, strong in her protection, the dying Christian always goes forth victorious from the combat. It is the idea of Mary's assistance in that last hour that makes the consolation of all the faithful. The just of old hoped in her, under this relation; and David says to God: "Though I should walk in the shadows of death, thy rod and staff will support me."

Cardinal Hugo says, that "by the staff is to be understood the cross of the Saviour, and by the rod the intercession of Mary," who is that rod or stem which Isaiah prophesies, saying: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root." (*Is. xi.*) And Saint Peter Damian adds: "The holy Virgin truly puts to flight, by her all-powerful protection, signified by the rod of Isaiah, all the enemies who would fain annul the fruits of man's redemption."

"When a man is near dying, all hell is in motion against him," says Isaiah again; "and calls up the most formidable demons, in order to make his soul fall into sin, and accuse him afterwards before the tribunal of

Jesus Christ. But if that soul is defended by Mary, the demons will not dare to accuse it, for they know that the Supreme Judge has never condemned any of those whom his divine Mother protects," says Richard of Saint Lawrence.

Saint Jerome, writing to the virgin Pulcheria, assured her that "Mary is not satisfied with assisting her servants at their last hour, but she also comes to meet their soul, and presents it herself at the tribunal of God;" which corresponds exactly with what Mary herself said to Saint Bridget, when speaking to her of those who have honored her during their life,—“I, who am their mother and their dear mistress, I meet them, to be their consolation and their strength.”

Saint Vincent Ferrier also tells us, that “the Blessed Virgin receives the souls of the dying, at the moment of their death.” Saint Alphonso Liguori adds: “That compassionate Queen receives our souls in the fold of her robe, and presents them to the Judge, her Son.” Who can doubt that our souls, passing into such hands, must be happy for eternity? Our death will be precious in the sight of the Lord, if we have the happiness to live in the service of that good Mother. How sweet will then appear those bonds which have bound us to her! We shall feel that the chains we have worn in serving her are chains of love. We shall only have felt their weight that we may remember having been happy slaves!

Let us, then, reanimate our fervor and our devotion towards Mary; and let us be assured that, at our death, she will procure us great consolations. Let us bear in mind that she is the faithful Virgin, as the Church sings, and that she will show herself such in regard to those

who, in going forth from this world, will prove that they have been true observers of her pious practices, zealous defenders of her prerogatives, religious propagators of her worship, and, above all, fervent imitators of her virtues. They will then rejoice for having imposed upon themselves some privation for her sake, for having fled the occasion of sin and resisted temptations, to render themselves worthy of having a share in her mediation.

EXAMPLE.

The holy Slavery of Mary.

The blessed Marin, brother of the holy Cardinal Peter Damian, first gave the example of consecrating himself to the Blessed Virgin in the quality of a slave, which was called the devotion of the Holy Slavery of the admirable Mother of God. He made profession of that holy slavery before an altar erected in her honor; he offered himself to her under that title of slave; and to treat himself as such, after having pronounced the act of profession, he imposed upon himself acts of rigor and austerity, such as were usually employed in regard to slaves. He then laid a piece of money upon the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and promised to pay that tribute annually on the same day, in quality of slave, and in recognition of her authority. He thenceforward considered himself as belonging entirely to that glorious princess of heaven and earth, in quality of her slave. And he derived the greatest fruits from that pious act, as is seen by the eminent sanctity which shone forth in his life and in his death. Subsequently, that practice having spread itself far and wide, the custom was introduced of wearing little chains as a mark of that holy

slavery. M. Boudon, in his excellent book on this subject, gives a long list of Saints, great men, kings and queens, who did honor to themselves by being enrolled amongst the slaves of the Mother of God.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Bridget.)

Pray for the souls in purgatory, especially for those who have been most devout to the Blessed Virgin. She declared to Saint Bridget that she was the mother of those holy souls, and that nothing could be done more acceptable in her sight than to aid them to be sooner delivered from their pains.

PRAYER TO THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN.

(By the pious Author of *Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis*.)

O holy Virgin, help of Christians, come to my aid in the midst of the miseries by which I am surrounded; let thine assistance deliver me from the perils to which I am exposed, both during my life and at the hour of my death. These, O Mary, are the graces which I beg thee to grant me, so that, strong in thy protection, I may be conqueror in the war which my enemies, visible and invisible, shall wage against me. Amen.

FIFTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS A SIGN OF
PEACE AND OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

“This is the sign of the covenant which I give between me and you; and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant.”
—*Gen.*, chap. ix.

IN calling Mary the Ark of the Covenant, the Church gives us sufficiently to understand what is the sign of peace and reconciliation that God has established between him and us,—a sign which represents in Christianity that ark of the ancient covenant which the Lord commanded to be constructed as the signal of his mercy, the presence of which wrought so many prodigies against the enemies of his people, at the same time that it was for that people the pledge of its return into favor with him. But, as St. Paul tells us, every thing that occurred to the Jews was figurative; and what for them was only a shadow, is for us truth itself. Now, the peace and recovery of grace with the Lord which the presence of the ark presaged to the Israelites, was but the emblem of that peace and reconciliation which Mary secures to us when we have the happiness to serve her lovingly.

The interpreters say, that “the rainbow that Saint John saw around the throne of the Eternal signified Mary,”—“who is continually near the throne of God,” adds the blessed Amadeus, “to obtain the revocation, or, at least, the mitigation, of the sentence which divine

justice launches against sinners." It was also Mary whom God had in view when he said to the patriarch Noah, "I will set in the heavens a sign of peace, and when I shall see it appear, I will remember me of the covenant that I have made with men."

Now, even as the rainbow was a sign which reminded the Lord of the peace he had made with the earth, so, when devotion shows itself in a soul, it is the sign by which God shows his mercy to it, and that he has already caused it to re-enter into his grace.

Another and no less consoling sign of this truth is the gentle dove which, after the Deluge, was sent forth from the ark by Noah, to find out whether the anger of the Lord was appeased. It returned with an olive-branch in its mouth, to announce to the Patriarch that the Lord had made peace with the earth. There is the image of the devotion to Mary which announces the peace that we enjoy with God, when we serve her with fidelity. Such is the opinion of the Saints. "For," exclaims Saint Bonaventure, addressing Mary, "thou art that faithful dove that, placing thyself between God and us, didst obtain the pardon of our sins. It is thou who, after the sad shipwreck of the world, hast brought the olive-branch, the sign of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; and, as the peace of heaven was gained by thee, it is also by thy means that sinners continue to be reconciled."

But nothing is more touching than the expressions used by the Holy Ghost, and which the Church applies to Mary, to show that her devotion is the most encouraging sign that we can have in this world of our state of grace with God. In the Canticle of Canticles it is said: "I am a wall, and my breasts as a tower; since I

am become in his presence as one finding peace." It is also to inculcate to us the same thought, that Mary is compared by the celestial Spouse to the tent of the peaceful Solomon, in order to make us understand that she is nothing but peace, bounty, and mercy; and that where-soever she dwells, there also is found the friendship of God;—that, even as beneath the tents of Solomon there was never any question of war, so in the service of Mary there is nothing treated of but reconciliation and salvation.

Cardinal Hugo confirms this explanation, by saying that "Mary enables those who are at war to recover peace; that, by her, pardon is granted to the guilty, salvation offered to those who have lost it, and mercy to those who are in despair."

When God created Mary, he addressed to her, say the interpreters, those words of the Spouse in the Canticles: "Feed your goats;" and it is known that by goats sinners are designated, as the just are, likewise, represented under the name of sheep. Now, William of Paris explains that passage thus, in speaking of Mary: "The goats," says he, "are intrusted to thee, O Mother of the Lord, in order that thou mayest transform them into sheep; so that whereas they would have to be placed on the day of judgment on the left of the sovereign Judge, they shall be placed on his right." And let us remark here that God did not tell Mary to feed all the goats, that is to say, all sinners without distinction, but only those which are hers; for Mary will save only those sinners who serve and honor her. As for those who are not devoted to her, and who do not invoke her, that they may go forth from the slough of their vices, those are not the goats of Mary. She does not feed them; and if

they persist in their alienation from that good Mother, they shall be treated as unclean animals before the Lord. But a reason, which always appears conclusive in proving that devotion to Mary is a distinctive mark of our peace with God, is, that she was raised to the Divine Maternity for sinners principally, that, by her intercession, she might bring them into the way of salvation. This was also the thought of the great Saint John Chrysostom, who said: "Mary was elected from all eternity to be the Mother of God, in order to save, by her mercy, those to whom her Son, in strict justice, cannot show favor." And Saint Anselm adds: "The Blessed Virgin was raised to that high dignity far more for sinners than for the just. Hence, as she is indebted to sinners for her glorious Maternity, how could I despair of my pardon, how great soever may be the number of my offences?" Finally, Saint Justin calls Mary "the arbitress of our destiny." Now, what is an arbitress, but a person in whose hands the parties interested leave the decision of an affair?

Now, if we love and serve Mary, she will love and protect us; and Jesus Christ having placed in her hands the suit between us and his terrible justice, she will decide in our favor,—for an arbiter who is the friend and protector of the weaker party, cannot make him unhappy by permitting him to lose his cause. What, then, have we to fear? That Mary will perhaps reject us, because the number of our sins exceeds that of the grains of sand on the seashore? Far from us be that thought; it is insulting to Mary, whom Saint Bridget calls the loadstone of hearts; and as the loadstone has the property of attracting iron, which is a very hard metal, so Mary attracts towards God the hardest hearts, the most

hardened sinners. Such is the happy change that Mary effects in those who are so happy as to live under her laws, and to embrace her devotion. And this change, we need not doubt, is the sign of our return into favor with God, or at least a proximate disposition to obtain that great benefit.

EXAMPLE.

Sweet consolations experienced in the service of Mary.

Father Bovius relates that a woman of bad life, named Helena, having gone to church, chanced to hear a sermon on the devotion of the Rosary, which made her wish to buy one; but she kept it concealed, so that no one might see it. She afterwards began to recite it; and although it was without devotion, the Blessed Virgin made her find so much pleasure in saying that prayer, that she was never weary of reciting it. By the habit of that holy practice, she merited to conceive such a horror of her past life, that her conscience gave her no rest. Forced, as it were, to resort to the sacrament of penance, she confessed with so much contrition, that the confessor was surprised. The confession being made, she went to throw herself at the foot of an altar of Mary, to thank her advocate and recite the Rosary in her honor. Helena thought she heard these words: "It is enough; change your life, and I will give you a share in my graces." Filled with confusion, the poor sinner replied to this inspiration: "Most holy Virgin, it is true that I have hitherto been inconstant, but do thou, whose power is so great, assist me to amend my life, and I give myself to thee. I will employ the rest of my days in doing penance." Helena distributed all she had

amongst the poor, and embraced a most austere life. She was often assailed by terrible temptations; but with the aid of Mary, she always came forth victorious. The Lord favored her with many supernatural graces, such as visions, revelations, and even the gift of prophecy. Finally, some days before her death (of which she had foreknowledge), the Mother of God came to visit her, in company with her Son, and that sinner was seen, under the form of a white dove, taking her flight to heaven.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Thomas Aquinas.)

You must persevere in the practices you are accustomed to observe in honor of the Blessed Virgin. It is one of the most efficacious means of obtaining the most signal graces from her bounty. Saint Thomas Aquinas was accustomed, in his early years, to recite daily some prayers to the Blessed Virgin. One day he dispensed with this pious practice, and then omitted it for several weeks; at length gave it up altogether. In a dream, he saw Mary, who embraced his companions, and said to him: "What hast thou to hope for—thou who hast abandoned thy pious practice?" Thomas awoke in a fright, and resumed his prayers.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Alphonso Liguori.)

O Mother of Mercy, O most holy Virgin, show thy generosity to the miserable sinner who invokes thee. If thou deignest to grant me thy protection, what have I to fear? No; I will fear nothing; neither my sins, since thou canst repair them; nor the devils, since thou

art more powerful than hell; nor thy Son, justly irritated against me, for a single word from thee suffices to appease his anger. I will thenceforth fear only myself, that, forgetting to invoke thee in temptation, I may be lost through my own fault. But I now promise thee henceforth to have recourse to thee in all my wants. Obtain for me that I may be faithful to this resolution. Amen.

FIFTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION : DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

“They that explain me shall have life everlasting.”—*Ecc.*, ch. xxiv.

To prove that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is truly the way to heaven, we need only remark the joy which shines on the face of her true servants. It is in them that she dwells, making their heart her resting-place, as the Church would have us understand, when she applies to Mary those words of Ecclesiasticus : “*In his omnibus requiem quæsi, et in hæreditate Domini morabor.*” In commenting upon this passage, Cardinal Hugo says : “Happy is he in whom Mary comes to make her dwelling. The Blessed Virgin, by that love which she bears us, would desire to see her devotion reign in the hearts of all the faithful ; but many reject, or know not how to preserve that precious devotion. Happy, then, is the

man who receives and retains it, for it subsists in all those who are the heritage of the Lord."

Mary, continuing to speak herself in that chapter of Ecclesiasticus, says: "He that made me rested in my tabernacle, and he said to me, 'Let thy dwelling be in Jacob;' that is to say, that devotion and confidence in me were rooted in the hearts of all the elect, of whom Jacob was the figure, and who are my heritage."

In fact, how many of the just would now be deprived of heaven, had not Mary conducted them thither by her powerful intercession? She it is who causes to shine in glory those lights which shall never be extinguished; that is to say, her servants, who shall shine eternally in the abode of the blessed by the virtues which they practised on earth in the service of their Queen and their Mistress. "For all those who trust in her protection," says Saint Bonaventure, "shall see the gates of heaven open to receive them;" so that, according to St. Ephrem, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is the key of Paradise; and the Church herself, in asking the assistance of Mary, calls her the gate of heaven. That holy Church also salutes Mary under the title of Star of the Sea; that is, because the mariner is guided to the port by watching the star: and it is only by keeping Mary in view that Christians can reach the kingdom of heaven, which is the true port of salvation.

It is not, then, without reason that the Saints have given to Mary the names most proper to make us comprehend that devotion to her can conduct us safely to heaven. It is in that view that Saint Peter Damian calls her the door of heaven; "because," says he, "God descended through her to earth, that by her, also, men may ascend from earth to heaven."

"Thou hast been filled with grace, O Queen of the Universe," says Saint Athanasius, "in order that thou mightest become the way of our salvation, and the ascent by which we gain the celestial country." Saint Bernard names her as "she who carries to heaven;" and Saint John the Geometrician says to her: "Hail, noble chariot, on which thy servants are conducted in triumph to the end of their course;" and Saint Bonaventure exclaims, addressing Mary, "Happy are those who know thee, O Mother of God; for to know thee is to know life eternal; and to celebrate thy praises is the way of salvation. The Holy Ghost tells us, in *Ecclesiasticus*, that no man in this life can be certain of his salvation; but to the question addressed by David to God, "Who, O Lord, shall inhabit thy tabernacle?" (*Ps. xiv.*), Saint Bonaventure replies, "He who shall attach himself to the feet of Mary, and will never leave her till he has obtained her benediction; for if she wills our salvation, it is secure." "With good reason," says Saint Ildesonso, "did the Blessed Virgin predict that all generations should call her Blessed, since it is by her that all the elect obtain the eternal beatitude." "O Mother of our God," exclaims Saint Methodus, addressing Mary, "thou art the beginning, the middle, and the end of our felicity. The beginning, in obtaining for us pardon of our sins; the middle, in obtaining for us perseverance in virtue; the end, in causing us to enter into eternal glory." "It is by thee," says Saint Bernard to her, "that heaven has been opened—that hell has given up its victims—that Jerusalem has been built up. Finally, it is by thee that eternal life is given to so many unfortunates who have merited eternal damnation."

It would seem that after that nothing stronger could

be added on the efficacy of devotion to Mary in obtaining Paradise; nothing can be said more conclusive, and consequently more proper, to lead us to put it in practice, fervently giving ourselves up to it. Nevertheless, we find yet another guarantee of that consoling truth in the words which Mary herself addresses to the faithful who honor her, and particularly when they strive to extend her worship. "They that work by me," she says, "shall not sin; they that explain me, shall have life everlasting." (*Ecclus.* xxiv.) "Happy, then," exclaims Saint Bonaventure, "are those who have her good graces! The blessed in heaven already regard them as their companions, and whoever will wear the livery of Mary shall have his name inscribed in the book of life." That is the promise which the Lord himself makes us in the Apocalypse, when he says that he "will write upon the forehead of the conqueror two names, the name of his God and the name of the Holy City." (*Apoc.* iii.) Now that Holy City of God is the Blessed Virgin, whose name is already written on the foreheads of her servants, who are conquerors of the world, the flesh, and the devil, by her powerful intercession; it is by her that they effect great things for heaven, of which the Royal Prophet said, "great things shall be recounted." (*Psalms* lxxxvi.) And that city of God, according to Saint Gregory's explanation of the passage, "is the Blessed Virgin, who lodged the King of kings in her womb, and clothed him with her own flesh, giving him the human being, which, hypostatically united to the divinity, makes the happiness of the Saints in heaven."

I can no longer wonder, then, that devotion to Mary should be considered an infallible sign of salvation, as Saint Bernard positively says it is; and not only is

that devotion in itself a most efficacious means of arriving at heaven, but so are all the practices connected with it; for devotion is a sentiment of the soul which impels us towards an object worthy of affection, whilst the practices consist in exterior acts which we perform to honor those to whom we pay a particular worship, in testimony of the love and respect we bear them; and that is why the Saints and all the Fathers of the spiritual life found the greatest hope for the salvation of the devout servants of Mary, when they see them full of zeal in following her pious practices, especially those which remind us of her greatness and her prerogatives.

After having been favored and privileged in this world amongst Christians, they shall be the most elevated in celestial glory; and they shall ever wear, says Father Nieremberg, distinctive marks which will make them known as having been on earth the servants of the Queen of Heaven. "Those, then, can be saved," says Saint Denis the Carthusian, "for whom the Mother of mercy shall have prayed; those only shall reign in heaven who have served that beneficent queen here below." "By me kings reign," she says (*Prov. viii.*), that is to say, Christians, the kings of Christ's kingdom;—first in their mortal life by controlling their passions; then an eternal reign in the heavenly Jerusalem, of which all the citizens are kings, and where, according to the expression of Richard of Saint Lawrence, Mary commands as a mistress, giving commissions to whomsoever she pleases. Is it not just that she should exercise her power in heaven, since she is the mother of the Lord? It is true, then, to say, with the Abbé Gueneé, that he who serves Mary, and for whom Mary intercedes, is as sure of Paradise as though he were already there; but, on the

contrary, those who neglect her, those who do not honor her, shall perish, and, deprived of the powerful assistance of the Mother of God, they shall be abandoned by her Son and by all the celestial court.

Oh, you who desire heaven, serve Mary, honor Mary, and you will surely gain eternal life; for she is as a port of safety which God has prepared that we may cross without danger the stormy waters of this world. Even those who have merited hell should not despair of recovering the eternal kingdom, provided that they enter the service of the Queen of heaven; "for," says Saint Germanus, addressing Mary, "sinners have sought salvation through thee, and have been saved." It is to give us a proof of this consoling assurance that Richard of Saint Lawrence very pertinently remarks, that "the holy Virgin, who in the Apocalypse is represented crowned with stars, is shown to us in the Canticles as crowned with ferocious beasts. How is that difference to be explained?" "It is," replies that learned author, "that the ferocious beasts are sinners, who, by the grace and intercession of Mary, being received into heaven, crown her brow much better than would a diadem of stars." Saint Magdalen of Pazzi saw, one day, "in the middle of the sea a bark which served as a refuge for all the servants of Mary, and the queen of heaven served as their pilot, and conducted them safely to port." By that vision the Saint was given to understand that those who live under the protection of the Mother of God need not fear the double shipwreck of sin and eternal damnation. "Let us do so, then," says St. Alphonso Ligouri in this place, "let us enter into that auspicious bark of devotion to Mary, and remain there as a place of safety." The Church sings to the Blessed Virgin—"All those who

have their habitation in thee, O holy Virgin, shall be glad and joyful." That joy shall commence in time, and be perpetuated throughout the long ages of eternity.

EXAMPLE.

A soldier devoted to Mary visibly protected by her.

A soldier, named Beau-Sejour, said every day seven Paters and seven Aves, in honor of the seven joys and seven sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. He had never failed in this practice; and if he happened to remember, after going to bed, that he had not fulfilled this duty, he rose immediately, knelt, and said the prayers. One battle-day, Beau-Sejour found himself in the front rank, in presence of the enemy, waiting for the signal to charge. He remembered, then, that he had not said his customary prayer; and he immediately crossed himself, and knelt down to say it—beginning, as usual, with the sign of the cross. His comrades, having perceived it, began to mock him, and the word went round from mouth to mouth. But Beau-Sejour gave himself no concern about it, and continued his prayer. Scarcely had he concluded it, when the enemy fired their first volley, and Beau-Sejour stood unhurt, unharmed—the only survivor in his whole rank! He saw, lying dead at his feet, those who but a moment before had been laughing at him, and mocking his devotion. He could not help shuddering at the sight, and recognized the hand of the powerful protectress who had saved him. During the rest of the battle, and even of the campaign, which was a murderous one, he received not a single wound. Having a length obtained his discharge, he returned home, and

published everywhere the praises of her to whom he knew himself indebted for life and health.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By B. Alain.)

Have a tender devotion for the "Hail Mary." Say it very often, and always before commencing each of your actions, great or small. The true servants of Mary say it every time the clock strikes. There are some who say it every quarter of an hour, and whenever they awake in the night. The blessed Alain de la Roche says, that that pious practice is an infallible sign of predestination for those who punctually observe it; and the Blessed Virgin herself told Saint Dominick, that, even as the redemption of the world had commenced, so to say, by the Angelical Salutation, all that was undertaken, and especially for salvation, ought to commence in the same way, in order to be successful.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By the pious author of the *Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis*.)

O Mary, may all the peoples of the earth serve thee! may all tribes honor thee! may all nations revere thee! For myself, holy Virgin, I ask of thee the grace that I may be penetrated with the most tender sentiments of love towards thee, to propagate thy worship everywhere, and that I may have strength to combat all those who would oppose it; so that, after laboring for thy glory here on earth, I may one day partake of it in heaven. Amen.

FIFTY-THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

INSTRUCTION: THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS THE HOPE AND THE SUPPORT OF ALL THE UNHAPPY.

“Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—*Saint Matthew.*

It cannot be doubted that Mary is the most perfect image of her divine Son, and that she imitated him in the practice of his sublime virtues, as far as it is possible for a creature to do so. Now, we know, and every page of the holy Gospel furnishes us with admirable proofs of it, that Jesus Christ left, everywhere on his passage during his mortal life, marks of his tender compassion for the unfortunate; and that such persons had only to present themselves to him to be certain of being relieved. The instances of the widow of Naïn, and of the paralytic of Jerusalem, those of the blind man of Jericho, and the lepers of Capharnaum, are, amongst an infinite number of others, eternal monuments of the inexhaustible charity of the Saviour of the world. That of his holy Mother may, undoubtedly, be compared to his; and to convince ourselves of a truth, the effects of which may so powerfully influence our existence, by making us bear its ills with resignation, let us open the divine Scriptures, those immortal codes in which it is recorded under the most expressive emblems.

The Jews are threatened with death by the Assyrians, who have sworn their ruin. In a situation so desperate,

they place their hope in the virtuous Judith, and their expectation is not disappointed; for the haughty general is overcome, his army is put to flight, and the Hebrews triumph, under the auspices of the heroine of Bethulia, to whom they return thanks for the victory she had procured them. They say to her those immortal words: "O incomparable woman, thou art the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and the honor of thy people." (*Judith*, xv.) Judith, the liberator of the Israelites, is the figure of Mary, the true liberator of Christians who, in misfortune, place all their confidence in her.

To continue: God, to manifest the glory of the Mother of his Son, permits the haughty Aman to abuse his power by requiring all the subjects of Assuerus to bend the knee and kiss the ground in his presence. Mordecai alone refused to pay that sacrilegious homage to the impious man, whose race the Lord had cursed. That refusal aroused the blind fury of the impious Amalkite, who, to revenge himself, obtains from the weakness of his master a sentence of death against all the children of Israel. The slaughter is to be general, and the sword will spare neither sex, nor age, nor rank. In such a fearful strait, the Lord does not abandon his people. He inspires the faithful Mordecai to have recourse to Queen Esther, and to put all his trust in her. His hope is not vain,—and how should it be so, when the wife of Assuerus was the figure of Mary? It would be easy to add to this picture of the most glorious traits of Mary, by drawing from the sacred code of our divine Scriptures, every page of which, so to speak, bears the impress of that incomparable Virgin. But, instead of citing here those images which in the Old Covenant presaged that the Blessed Virgin was to be, in the New,

the hope and the support of the faithful, it is better to prove by facts that she accomplishes faithfully in all times, in all places, and towards all men, all that the Holy Ghost has had written of her.

To convince ourselves of this, let us enter into those superb sanctuaries, eternal monuments of the hope which Christians have always had in Mary, and which are the expression of their gratitude to her for the benefits they have received from her inexhaustible goodness. At first sight of those magnificent temples raised in honor of the Blessed Virgin, may we not exclaim in a sentiment of admiration as did a holy French prelate (Monteil d'Adhemar, Bishop of Puy and author of the *Salve Regina*), when he saw a vast edifice which Christian charity had erected for the relief of suffering humanity, "Behold what stones!" And, apostrophizing the benevolent men who had contributed to its construction, he added, "Behold what men!" Yes, truly, might we say, admiring the beauty of the edifices consecrated to the glory of the Queen of heaven: "Behold what stones! how majestic they are!" But, thinking of the piety of those who reared them, let us add, "Behold what men!" And, above all, let us not omit to read the inscription which adorns their front, indicating at once the motive and the object of their construction—"Our hope." It was, say their pious founders, "it was our hope in Mary that brought us to her feet, and it is the graces of all kinds which she has granted to us that make us regard her as our only refuge in our necessities. And that hope has never been vain, and that refuge—*our hope, our refuge*—has never failed any one. We ourselves can bear witness of that. Let us admire those most Christian kings, prostrate before the altar of Mary, consecrating to her their persons, their

subjects, their kingdom, testifying their gratitude to her for the signal favors with which she has loaded them, as often as they have claimed her succor in their need.

Behold pious emperors taking the Blessed Virgin for their particular patroness, and then under her auspices vanquishing the numerous enemies who pressed upon them from every side, and from whom, without the special assistance of Heaven they could not possibly escape. (The Emperors of Austria.) Contemplate august sovereign pontiffs, more illustrious by their tender piety towards Mary than by the tiara they wore with so much honor, placing in her their confidence;—now intreating her not to allow the Spouse of her divine Son to fall into the hands of the infidels who threaten to invade Christendom, to render it the tributary and slave of impiety (Pius V.); anon supplicating her to deliver the Holy City from the most terrible scourge that can desolate sad humanity, and to save its unfortunate inhabitants from the death that is making such frightful ravages amongst them. (Pope Saint Gregory the Great.) On the other side, behold the touching spectacle of whole populations stricken by the most frightful plagues, having recourse to Mary, and sensibly experiencing that not in vain does the Church call her the hope and the succor of unhappy Christians. Everywhere your eyes fall upon objects which excite confidence in that good Mother, and remind you that, even as Christ healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and consoled all the unhappy, so also does Mary, his perfect imitator, welcome all the unfortunate, and extend a helping hand to them.

Let no one be surprised, then, if all the peoples of the earth have turned towards Mary, when they saw them-

selves overwhelmed by misfortune. Neither let any wonder that all the nations of the earth vie with each other in proclaiming her blessed, since she is the source of their happiness, and the cause of their joy. Nor yet let it be wondered at if the Saints of all times, of all places, of all states, have always considered her as their only hope. Finally, it is not surprising if men truly illustrious by their birth, their rank, their dignities, and their talents, have so often had recourse to her goodness, and have taken so lively an interest in the propagation of her worship.

Behold on the chair of Saint Peter such pontiffs as Gregory the Great, Pius V., Innocent III., and John XXII. Behold in the episcopate such men as Augustine, Ambrose, Charles Borromeo, and Francis de Sales. Behold on the throne an Amadeus of Savoy, a Stephen of Hungary, a Ferdinand of Austria. And, at the present day amongst ourselves, in the very age in which we live, what pontiff in the Church is the most holy, what bishop the most venerable, what pastor the most fervent, what religious community the most regular? And, in the world, what prince is the most just, what magistrate the most upright, what citizen the most honest? Is it not everywhere the man who is the most sincerely attached to the worship of Mary, who most faithfully observes all its pious practices? Why? Because devotion to Mary, properly understood, always has been, and always will be, the love of all duties; so that whoever has it truly for his portion, is all that he ought to be before God and man.

Here, then, let us exclaim with Saint John Damascene, "Come all the nations of the world, come all the inhabitants of the earth—of all languages, of all ages, and of all ranks and dignities; let us embrace the worship of

her who makes the joy of all the unhappy by becoming their support in their weakness, and their consolation in their afflictions.

EXAMPLE.

Successful issue obtained in lawsuits and temporal affairs through the protection of Mary.

A poor woman had a lawsuit against a rich and powerful person who had corrupted his judges by money and by favor. The cause was allowed to linger on, so as to tire the poor plaintiff out, and consume and swallow up the whole in costs. The judge determined, at length, to decide against her, although he clearly saw that she had right on her side. Deploring her misfortune, and finding no one to interfere on her behalf, she implored the aid and protection of the Blessed Virgin. She had herself enrolled in the Confraternity of the Rosary, and promised to say it every day. The judge, who was on the point of deciding in favor of her adversary, did the very reverse. He would fain have retracted, and altered his decision, but he found it utterly impossible, although he tried it three several times; so that the good lady saw herself reinstated in all her property, and from being exceedingly poor, through the injustice formerly done her, became very wealthy. From that time forth she never failed to implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, to attach herself to her service, to honor her in every way, and to induce others by her example to honor and invoke her in all their wants. (*Alain de la Roche.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By all who are truly devoted to the Blessed Virgin.)

The holy habit should be acquired of invoking Mary in all painful and perilous situations, but especially in

all spiritual dangers. Such has been the practice of all the truly devout to Mary, and especially of Saint John Damascene, Saint Augustine, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Bernard, Saint Dominick, &c.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

which the Church addresses to her in her necessities.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

FIFTY-FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE SANCTITY OF THE NAME OF MARY.

“Now the name of the Virgin was Mary.”—*St. Luke.*

WE have already remarked, that Mary signifies, in Syriac, Lady, Mistress, Sovereign; and in Hebrew, Star of the Sea. It is not known whether it was by a special revelation that this name was given to the Blessed Virgin; but there is no doubt, say the Fathers, that God gave it to her, since she alone was to fulfil all its significations and all its mysteries. “It was the three persons of the most Holy Trinity that gave thee a name so holy and so worthy of respect, O holy Virgin!” exclaims the learned and pious Raymond Jourdan (surnamed the learned Idiot), “to the end that, hearing it pronounced, all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell should bend

the knee. That name," he adds, "had such a virtue, such an excellence, that heaven applauds, earth rejoices, and the angels themselves tremble with joy when it is pronounced." "Certainly," says Saint Bernard, "the Mother of God could not have a name more appropriate to her than that of Mary, nor one that could better express her excellence, her greatness, and her high dignity. Mary is that brilliant and beautiful star elevated above the great, vast sea of the world. To lose sight of that star is to put one's self in obvious danger of losing the way, or running upon shoals—in fine, of suffering a fatal shipwreck; tempests are frequent on that troubled sea. No port, no shelter from the stormy winds. Would you avoid shipwreck, look ever at that star; call Mary to your aid; cease not to invoke the name of Mary." "Are you exposed to misfortune," says the great Albert,— "are you overcome by the sad calamities of life, are you borne down by the weight of adversity?—invoke the name of Mary."

"The name of Mary," says Saint Anthony of Padua, "is a subject of joy and confidence for all those who pronounce it with devotion and with respect; it is sweeter to the mouth than honey, more pleasing to the ear than a melodious song, and more delightful to the heart than the sweetest joy." "What name, after that of Jesus," says the celebrated Abbot of Citeaux, "what name should be published with more praise, with more veneration, than the name of Mary? Was there not reason to compare it to a precious oil that sheds an exquisite odor all around?"

We know that Saint Anselm carries still further the veneration inspired by the holy name of Mary; for he says that "grace and mercy are obtained rather by

asking them in the name of Mary than by invoking the holy name of Jesus." Not that the name of Jesus is not worthy of more respect than that of Mary, but that the Blessed Virgin intercedes herself with her Son, according to the thought of this father, for those who claim her powerful protection by invoking her holy name.

"The Church no sooner hears the name of Mary," says the learned Peter de Blois, "than she bends the knee through the respect she bears to that holy name; and it is never pronounced that the devotion of the faithful is not revived."

From the very beginning of Christianity, the faithful have been accustomed not to separate those two august names of Jesus and Mary. In the first days of fervor, one was rarely pronounced without the other. Religion has not grown old in the Church; and, as the truly faithful have now the same love and the same respect for the Son, they have also for the Mother the same veneration and the same affection. Hence it is, that those two august names are commonly joined together in the heart and in the mouth of Christians, especially at the hour of death: and few of the saints have been seen who had not the devotion and the sweet consolation of dying with the names of Jesus and Mary on their lips. That name of Mary, the terror of hell, the joy of heaven, and the consolation of the faithful on earth, is so dear and so venerable to the whole Church, that she has established a particular festival in its honor.

It was in 1683, on occasion of the celebrated victory obtained over the Turks by Leopold, Emperor of Austria, that Pope Innocent XI., persuaded that it was owing to the special protection of the holy name of Mary, ordained, in gratitude for so signal a favor, that the feast of that

holy name, already established in many provinces of Christendom, should be thenceforward celebrated universally, by precept, throughout all the Church, and fixed it for the Sunday following the Nativity, in memory of that famous day, corresponding to the fifth day of the octave.

Let us, then, have the most profound respect for the august and holy name of Mary; let us call upon that name with confidence; let us invoke it with veneration; and, penetrated with the sentiments of St. Bernard, let us exclaim, addressing ourselves with him to Mary, "O sublime Virgin, merciful, and deserving of all praise! Thy name, so sweet, so amiable, cannot be pronounced without inflaming the heart; and the very thought of it serves to cheer and revive the hearts of thy true servants."

EXAMPLE.

Sweet Effects of the Invocation of the Name of Mary.

The blessed Herman, as it is related by Surius, very frequently pronounced the sacred name of Mary, and derived prodigious effects from the practice. When he was alone, he would prostrate himself on the pavement of his cell, and in that posture he loved to repeat incessantly, "Mary, Mary, Mary!" One of his friends, who was also much devoted to the Blessed Virgin, having surprised him in one of those moments which he consecrated to honor the name of his amiable Mother, was surprised to see him so long and so profoundly absorbed. "What are you doing there," said he, "and by what thoughts are you so occupied?"

"I am culling," replied Herman, "with divine consolation, the most delicious fruits from the sweet name of

Mary. When I pronounce it, it seems to me that all flowers, all perfumes, are around me embalming the air, whilst a certain virtue that I know not of fills my soul with a celestial joy. Here I am refreshed after all my labors, here I forget all the bitterness of life, and were it possible I would never leave this position, never cease to repeat the holy name of Mary. (*Related by Surius.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Camillus of Lellis.)

Frequently repeat the holy name of Mary, and see that the dying invoke it often in their illness; St. Camillus of Lellis made this twofold recommendation unceasingly to his monks; it was what he practised in regard to others, and he put it in practice with more consolation for himself. The historian of his life relates that in his last moments he so affectionately pronounced the name of Jesus and Mary that the hearts of all present were inflamed. With his arms crossed, and his eyes fixed on the images of Jesus and Mary, he expired, the joy of heaven already painted on his face.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bonaventure.)

Holy Virgin, for the glory of thy name, I beseech thee that when my soul shall depart from my body, thou wilt deign to meet and receive it. O Mary, do not refuse me, then, the grace to sustain it by thy sweet presence; be its ladder and its way to heaven; finally, obtain for it pardon and eternal rest. Amen.

FIFTY-FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE ADVANTAGES OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY NAME OF MARY.

"The Lord hath so magnified thy name, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouths of men."—*Judith*, chap. xiii.

WE have already seen how holy is the name of Mary; in this instruction we are about to see how advantageous is the devotion we owe to that august name; as well in regard to the graces of salvation as to those of which we have corporal need.

"As soon," says Saint Peter Damian, "as the name of Mary was drawn from the bosom of the Divinity, the great work of our salvation was resolved upon; and as without the *Word* nothing has been created, so nothing has been repaired without Mary."

It is, then, a name of salvation, a name of benediction, a name of mercy, because it has descended from heaven; "for," says Saint Epiphanius, "it was not Mary's parents who gave her that august name, it was imposed upon her by the express will of God." After the name of Jesus, the name of Mary is above all other names; and God has filled it with grace and sweetness, in order that it may procure all sorts of good for those who pronounce it; wherefore it is that Saint Epiphanius exclaims, addressing himself to the Blessed Virgin: "Mary! we cannot pronounce thy name without feeling ourselves in-

flamed with love." And Saint Bonaventure adds, "that no one ever invokes it without deriving the greatest advantages from it. That name is specially efficacious in vanquishing and dispelling the temptations of hell." "What art thou, then, O Mary?" fervently exclaims the blessed Henry. Suso, "what art thou, then, O Mary, if thy name is so amiable, so sweet, and so powerful!"

It is not with the name of Mary as with other names that signify nothing, and have no virtue. "But for that of Mary, the very thought of it refreshes the hearts of her servants; remembering it, the afflicted are consoled, wanderers are brought back into the right way, sinners encouraged not to give themselves up to despair; and, as wealth poured into the lap of the poor consoles them, so the name of Mary, preferable to all the riches of the earth, is our relief in the miseries of the present life." It is Richard of Saint Lawrence who speaks thus, and who, consequently, exhorts sinners to have recourse to that great name: it will suffice to cure all their infirmities; and, according to him there is no pestilence so malignant that it will not yield to its salutary force. That name cannot be uttered but it brings some advantages to the soul, and its virtue is so efficacious that it softens even the hardest hearts; it is a delicious perfume which embalms the soul with all the virtues, and whoever invokes it with love and confidence is assured that he will find in it a beginning of superabundant grace for this world, and the germ of a sublime glory for eternity. This is the consoling effect of the invocation of the holy name of Mary, indicated by Jesus Christ himself to Saint Bridget, when, speaking of his Mother in her presence, he said: "My mother, I will give three things to those who shall put their trust in thy name

with a firm purpose of amendment—contrition for their sins, the means of satisfying my justice, and that of persevering to obtain the kingdom of heaven. (*Rev.*, chap. i.) And how could it be otherwise, since at that name, says the Blessed Alain, Satan flees and all hell trembles? That is what happened to a new convert in Japan, to whom the devils one day appeared under horrible figures, in order to frighten him; but he without the least fear or discomposure answered them: “I cannot resist, if God permits—you do with me what you will; I have no other weapon for my defence but the holy names of Jesus and Mary.” Scarcely had he uttered those two august names, when the earth opened and swallowed up the infernal troop. Richard of Saint Lawrence was, therefore, justified in saying that “the name of Mary is as a strong tower, which will not only be the asylum of sinners to shield them from chastisement, but also the fortress of the just, to preserve them from the assaults of hell.”

Who, indeed, could count up all the victories which the servants of Mary have gained by the effect of that sacred name? It was thus that St. Anthony of Padua, the blessed Henry Suso, and a number of others who were devoted to the holy name of Mary put the demons to flight.

Of what virtue and efficacy is not that holy name against all sorts of temptations! “It may be piously believed,” says St. Alphonso Liguori, “that he has not tarnished the holy virtue of purity who remembers having invoked the name of Mary at the height of his temptations; but let us not deceive ourselves, let us seek that celestial virtue, remembering, says Richard of Saint Lawrence, “that in the Gospel the name of Mary is

never separated from that of Virgin, in order to make us understand that if, on the one side, that holy name is all-powerful to repress the motions of concupiscence, on the other side its invocation must be the index of the love of the virtue of purity in him who pronounces it; it is by that that this name of hope, of strength, of consolation, of grace, and of benediction will truly protect us and deliver us from all the dangers by which we are surrounded. It will support us in our pains and in our anguish, in our ills and in our misfortunes. Let us then follow the advice of Saint Bernard, who unceasingly tells us that in perils and in temptations, in doubts and in perplexities, we must invoke Mary, and that her holy name should never be absent from our lips or from our hearts. Let us hear, moreover, the venerable Thomas à Kempis, who says, in a pathetic discourse on devotion to the Mother of God: "My brethren, if you desire to be consoled in your tribulations, have recourse to Mary, pay homage to her, invoke her, recommend yourselves to her; rejoice with Mary, weep with Mary, walk with Mary, seek Jesus with Mary; finally, desire to live and die with Jesus and Mary!"

EXAMPLE.

Kings, driven from their States, regain their thrones by the powerful invocation of the holy name of Mary.

In the year 1683, the Turks, proud of the successes they had obtained over the German empire, formed the design of pushing their conquests beyond the Danube and the Rhine; and menacing all Christendom, they came, with an army of two hundred thousand men, to lay siege to Vienna. The alarm was general, the people abandoned all, and fled in every direction; the emperor,

Leopold I., not having troops enough to oppose the Ottoman army, was obliged to fly in all haste from Vienna; he left the city on one side, with his whole family, at the moment when the enemy arrived on the other to commence the siege. On the eve of the Assumption, the Turks opened their trenches and pushed forward with frightful rapidity: to increase the misfortune, the Scotch church had taken fire, and the flames reached the arsenal; but by the visible protection of the Blessed Virgin, on the very day of the Assumption the fire suddenly ceased, so that powder and other munitions were taken thence to a place of safety. So marked a favor from the Mother of God reanimated the failing courage of the besieged; the continual fire of the besiegers, and the shells which laid houses in ruins, did not prevent the inhabitants from imploring heaven night and day in the churches, nor the preachers from exhorting them to put all their confidence in their powerful protectress. On the 31st of August the Turks had pushed their works so far forward, that the soldiers of the opposing forces often met and fought in the ditches with the stakes of the palisades: Vienna, the bulwark of Christendom, was almost reduced to ashes, when, on the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the Christians, having redoubled their prayers and their devotions, received, as if by miracle, certain tidings that they should speedily obtain the succor which they had expected, but had not dared to hope for. And, in fact, on the following day, the second day of the octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, the Kalemberg mountain was seen covered with troops. It was the great Sobieski, king of Poland, at the head of an army, not numerous it is true, but strong with assistance from God. On the 12th he went, with Prince

Charles of Lorraine, to the chapel of St. Leopold, where they heard mass, the king himself serving it, kneeling at the foot of the altar, with his arms extended in a cross, except at those moments when the priest required his ministration; he received holy communion, and after placing his army and himself under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, after having received with his whole army the benediction given in the name of the Holy Father, that religious prince rose, and filled with a holy confidence, exclaimed: "Now let us march under the all-powerful protection of the Mother of God." When the little army of Christians had seen from the mountaintops the innumerable hosts of the infidels, all felt that victory could only come from heaven; and in truth it was altogether miraculous. After the first severe encounter, the Khan of the Tartars was the first to fly; and the Grand Vizier, in spite of himself, and foaming with rage, was carried away in the torrent, leaving on the field all his baggage, munitions of war, and provisions, his whole artillery, amounting to 180 pieces of cannon, nearly 10,000 dead, and the great standard of Mahomet. John Sobieski re-entered Vienna with the emperor Leopold, and himself intoned the *Te Deum*. From that day forth he always took with him an image of Our Lady of Loretto, miraculously found, two angels supporting a crown over the head of the Blessed Virgin, each holding in his hand a scroll on which are these words: "By this image of Mary I, John, shall conquer."

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Bernard.)

Take the name of Mary as a defence against all your enemies, visible and invisible. St. Edward never went

to sleep without having first marked on his forehead, with his thumb, the names of Jesus and of Mary; let us, in like manner, never go to sleep without having invoked these two august names.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernardine of Sienna.)

What shall I say, O Mary, that is worthy of thee! Thou art the gate of heaven, the glory of mankind, the sovereign of angels, the terror of demons, the refuge of sinners, the mirror of purity, the source of grace, the treasury of celestial gifts, the consoler of the poor, the joy of the humble, the support of the elect, the guide of travellers, the port of the shipwrecked, the shield of combatants, the mother of orphans, the stay of widows, the advocate of penitents, the cure of the sick, the model of the just, the hope and the glory of Christians, the seal and mark of true Catholics. Amen.

FIFTY-SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE UTILITY OF PRACTICES OF DEVOTION IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his.”—2 *Timothy*, chap. ii., 19.

THE practices in honor of Mary, born of the love of that good Mother, are marvellously calculated to main-

tain and increase it. The every-day experience which the servants of the Blessed Virgin have of this is a certain proof of it.

“The Queen of heaven,” says Saint Andrew of Crete, “is so liberal and so grateful, that she rewards small services by most signal graces. There are persons who know how to esteem only practices which have a certain degree of ostentation, and who despise those which are simple and obscure; but it must be considered that God loves the humble, that it is to simple souls he communicates himself, and that it is with these souls he treats familiarly. God has been pleased to hide his greatest mysteries under the thickest veils. He has attached his most precious grace to things contemptible in appearance,—as the grace of baptism to some drops of water, the remission of sins to some words of a priest; so it is with other marvels of his power and his mercy. What is there, then, surprising in his having attached precious graces to practices inspired by love and respect for his divine Mother, however trivial, mean and contemptible, they may appear to human pride? This consideration also applies to this YEAR OF MARY, which must fall into the hands of the common faithful, to whose taste it is more just and more reasonable that it should be accommodated, than to that of certain persons who make no account of any thing but what is conformable to their own ideas, often false and delusive.

From these practices in honor of Mary great advantages may be drawn, whether for the reform of morals or progress in piety.

Could it be otherwise, when all those practices lead us to honor the Blessed Virgin in a particular manner? Now, what can be more proper to merit her graces, than to

perform acts which are agreeable to her ! To convince ourselves of it, let us rapidly glance over some of those principal practices which must be most familiar to us: First, the recitation of the "Hail Mary," that prayer which is infinitely pleasing to the Blessed Virgin, since it seems as though every time we repeat it we renew the joy that she must have felt when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she should be Mother of God. It is at the term of that angelical salutation that heaven rejoices, that hell trembles, that the devil flies. Now, what must not be the utility of a prayer so beautiful, and which penetrates the soul of those who say it with devotion?

The servants of Mary have the pious custom of celebrating, with much fervor, the novenas of her festivals; and that good Mother rewards them, by obtaining for them special graces. What can be more profitable than the usage of such practices? That of visiting the images of the Blessed Virgin has been marked by so many prodigies!

Here I hear a Saint Bernard, who, passing before an image of Mary, says, "Hail Mary!" and Mary replies: "Hail Bernard!" to prove to him that the salutation was agreeable to her. There I see a Saint Anthony of Padua, a Saint Stanislaus and others, who, praying before an image of Mary, obtain from her the most signal favors, even to that of giving into their hands her divine infant Jesus.

But of all the practices we observe in honor of Mary, the two most fruitful in graces are, undoubtedly, those of the holy Rosary and the holy Scapular. The first was inspired to Saint Dominick by the Blessed Virgin, who herself declared to him, that "it would be a celestial

rain which should produce great fruits in souls." It was by means of it that Saint Dominick converted the greatest sinners. Its virtue is no less efficacious in remedying the ills of the body, and procuring the benefits of this life. Hence, it is not to be wondered at, if the sovereign pontiffs have so freely lavished the treasures of the Church upon those who follow that holy practice; as we may see in the bulls of Urban IV., John XXII., Sixtus IV., Innocent VIII., Alexander VI., Julius II., Leo X., Adrian VI., Paul III., Pius IV., Pius V., Gregory XIII., Clement VIII., and Paul V.

The Scapular is equally inestimable for the graces which it attracts to those who have the happiness of wearing it, and faithfully acquitting themselves of the duties it imposes upon them. To judge of the multitude and value of those graces, we have but to cast our eyes on the great number of illustrious persons who have hastened to invest themselves with that habit, the honorable livery of the Blessed Virgin. She takes pleasure in bestowing her favors on those who wear it worthily.

But how holy soever may be the various practices we have mentioned, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the most excellent of all, and without which we need not count much on the others, is the imitation of her virtues. "Would you," says Saint Bonaventure, "make the homage you pay to the Queen of heaven acceptable to her, do all you can to imitate her purity, by the innocence and integrity of your conduct."

What that great servant of the Blessed Virgin says of purity, must be equally understood of all the other virtues, as he warns us in another place: "A sure and

infallible means of attracting to yourself the favorable glances of the Mother of goodness is to make it your particular study to imitate her as far as you can in all the actions of your life. You will thereby show yourself the worthy son of so good a Mother, and you will at the same time merit to be recognized and treated by her as one of her true children." It is, therefore, an illusion to imagine that because one has observed some of the practices here referred to, one is truly devout to Mary, and is entitled to her protection, when in other respects his conduct is entirely opposed to the profession he makes of serving her. It is certain that all the practices, which the pious servants of Mary observe in her honor, are most useful, and may greatly assist us in meriting the favors of that divine and merciful Mother; but, in order that they may be thus rewarded, it is necessary that, in offering them, we should be free from sin, or, at least, have a firm purpose of quitting our evil habits and doing all we can to get rid of them. In a word, our conduct should be in harmony with our devotion.

How many, who are now in hell, would have been saved, if they had continued the practices of devotion they had commenced in honor of Mary!

Let us persevere, then, in our holy practices; let us devoutly observe them, assured that we shall experience their utility by the graces that Mary will bestow upon us in reward of our love for her.

EXAMPLE.

The Birth of Saint Louis, King of France, obtained from God by Devotion to Mary.

The birth of Saint Louis, King of France, was owing to the Mother of God and the devotion of the Holy

Rosary. The pious Queen Blanche of Castile, who was the mother of that holy king, had long bewailed her sterility. Saint Dominick, who was her contemporary, advised her to have recourse to the Blessed Virgin and the devotion of the Rosary, to recite it often, and to engage the most devout persons she knew of in her kingdom frequently to offer in her name the same homage to the Blessed Virgin. He thus taught her to hope that, by the protection of the Mother of Mercy, she might obtain the fruit of benediction. Blanche followed his advice with as much success as fidelity. The virtue of the sacred rosary and the piety of the virtuous princess speedily obtained the desired effect. She had a son, and in her son a king who brought sanctity to the throne; who consecrated his crown by all Christian virtues; who made his life illustrious by the most heroic actions. Finally, who wore to the tomb the robe of baptismal innocence, enriched by all the merits which make saints and great saints. (*Life of the Saint.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Venerable Berchmans.)

Reflect often on the virtues of Mary, that you may effectually keep them in remembrance. It were to be wished that all those who call themselves devout to Mary might imitate the example of the venerable Berchmans. His great pleasure was to discourse on the greatness of the Mother of God; he sought every occasion to make that the subject of his conversation; and, in order to do so the more easily and with more fruit, he had collected from many good authors the praises of the Queen of heaven. He was never better pleased than

when he could meet with some one particularly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, for then there ensued a kind of combat as to who should give her the most praise. Berchmans was always sure to come off victorious, so eloquent was he when speaking of Mary.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Augustine.)

Holy Mary, refuse not thine aid to the unhappy, raise the courage of the weak, and console those who are in affliction; pray for all the people, specially protect the clergy, and intercede for the devout female sex. Finally, let all those who have recourse to thee in their necessities feel the effects of thy all-powerful protection. Amen.

FIFTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE DEVOTION OF WEARING MEDALS, CORDS, AND GIRDLES, IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"She put on him very good garments."—*Gen.*, chap. xxvii.

THE love that we have for a person, when it is true and sincere, is not confined to the desire of seeing that person often, but it also leads us to have near us the portrait, or some other object, belonging to, and reminding us of, that person. There is, precisely, the motive which the servants of the Blessed Virgin had in having

medals struck, which they have the custom of carrying about them, that they may continually have her august features present to them, and thus be constantly reminded of their good Mother. This is the devotion of almost all the truly devout to Mary. It has been in time that of all those who have truly loved her, like a Saint Stanislaus Kotska, who, when he could no longer say the beads, being so much weakened by the illness of which he died, held them in his hands, kissing the medal every moment, and replying to those who asked him why he did so, "that it was to keep him in mind of his good Mother." It was also the custom of Saint Bernardine of Sienna, and numerous other servants of the Queen of heaven. It was the custom of one of the greatest kings that ever wore the diadem in Europe, Charlemagne, who, during his life, had always, from devotion, a medal of our Lady suspended by a gold chain from his neck, and would be buried with that medal. The cords and girdles, worn in honor of the Blessed Virgin, are also much in use amongst her servants. This devotion is one of the most precious, and dates from the birth of Christianity. It originated thus: It was the custom among the Jews for all maidens to wear a girdle till they were married, when they went and offered it to God in the temple. Thenceforward they enjoyed the dignity and the privileges of mothers. When they became mothers, they wore another, as the symbol of the modesty and chastity proper to all wives. This girdle, according to the remark of the learned Peter of Saint Romuald, was always buried with them. The girdle of the Blessed Virgin was found in her tomb in 450, by Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem; and the pious princess Pulcheria had it conveyed to Constantinople, where it was deposited in the

magnificent church of our Lady, styled of *the Blaquernes*. This it was that led to the establishment in the Greek Church of a particular feast, that of "the Girdle of the Blessed Virgin," on the 2d of July, being the day of that celebrated translation; and a second feast on the 31st of August, which is thought to have been the day on which the Blessed Virgin, when her miraculous pregnancy appeared, went to offer her virginal cincture to God in the Temple.

Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, made several sermons in honor of that sacred girdle; and he mentions miracles that occurred by touching it. "We cannot look upon thy venerable cincture," says he, "without being overwhelmed with joy."

The celebrated Euthymius enlarges still more upon the devotion due to that holy relic. "We honor," says he, "that venerable cincture which we see in perfect preservation after the lapse of nine hundred years. We believe that the Queen of heaven was girt with it. The altars of the false gods have been shattered in presence of that relic. How many temples and idols has it not overthrown, and how many miracles does it work, before the eyes of all the world!"

The Christian princes having conquered the Holy Land from the infidels, and the French having made themselves masters of Constantinople, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, they brought into France a great number of holy relics, with which most of the churches there are still enriched. The two girdles of the Blessed Virgin are not the least precious among them; one is preserved in the church of Bruges, in Flanders, and the other may be seen in the celebrated church of Our Lady of Puy, in Velay. Most of the churches

in Spain celebrate a particular festival in honor of the holy Virgin's offering of her cincture in the Temple. Aix la Chapelle and Chartres pride themselves on the possession of a portion of that treasure, as appears by a Greek inscription over the place where the holy relic is preserved: "A part of the venerable cincture of the Mother of God."

We read, in the Life of Saint Monica, that the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, clothed in black, with a girdle of the same color, more than an inch broad; and there is no doubt that it was that mysterious apparition which gave rise to the pious confraternity styled *The Cincture of the Mother of God*, and established throughout the whole order of Saint Augustine. It was in the year 1446, under the pontificate of Eugenius IV., that it was first instituted, under the title of *The Cincture of the most Holy Virgin*; and, subsequently, under that of *Our Lady of Consolation*.

Hence came in the Church, amongst the devout servants of Mary, the custom of wearing cords and girdles in her honor. That custom is widely spread; and when one is penetrated with the laudable motives for which it was introduced, and the end to be kept in view, it cannot but be agreeable to the Blessed Virgin, and proper to merit abundant graces for those who practise that devotion for her sake, with a view to honor her specially by some exterior and distinctive marks.

EXAMPLE.

Emma ; or, the happy slave of Mary.

Father Rheo, in his "Meditations for Saturday," and also Father Lereu, relate, that in Gueldres, about the

year 1465, there lived a young girl named Mary. Her uncle one day sent her to the market, in the town of Nimeguen, to make some purchases; and as it would have been too late for her to return before night, he told her to go and sleep at the house of one of her aunts. Our young girl obeyed; but the aunt having treated her very harshly, and refused to let her stay over night, poor Mary was obliged to set out for home. Being very angry with her aunt, and frightened at finding herself alone by night on the public road, she called aloud for the devil to come to her assistance. He immediately appeared to her, under the form of a young man, and offered to accompany her, and render her every assistance she required, provided she would, in return, promise him one thing. "I will do whatever you please," said the unfortunate girl. "I am not exacting," replied the devil; "I only require that, henceforth, you will not make the sign of the cross, and that you will change your name." "As for the sign of the cross," replied the girl, "I promise you that I will make it no more; but my name of Mary is so dear to me, that I will not change it." "Very well," said the devil, "I will not help you." After much disputing, it was at length agreed that she should call herself by the first letter of her name, *Emm*, or *Emma*. Whereupon they took the road to Antwerp, where, for six years, she lived with her detestable companion. At the end of that time she felt desirous of seeing her native place again. The devil was much opposed to it, but at length he was forced to yield to her entreaties; and they set out for Nimeguen. On arriving there they went to the theatre, where a sacred drama was being performed, the subject of which was taken from the life of the Blessed Virgin. The unfortunate Emma, with the

little devotion she had still preserved for the Mother of God, began to weep. "What now," said her companion, "are we to have two tragedies here at once?" and he took her under his arm to remove her from the theatre. She resisted; and the devil, seeing that his prey was about to escape him, became furious, raised her into the air, and threw her into the middle of the parquette. When the unhappy girl recovered her senses, after the shock of her fall, she told her story; then went to confession, but was sent by the priest to the bishop of Cologne, and by the bishop to the Pope. The sovereign pontiff hearing her in confession, ordered her, for penance, to wear three iron rings,—one on her neck, and one on either arm. The penitent obeyed; and having repaired to Maëstricht, secluded herself in a monastery of female penitents, where she lived fourteen years in exercises of the most austere penance. Awaking one morning, she found that the three iron rings had broken of themselves. Two years after, she died in the odor of sanctity, and asked to be buried with the three rings, which, from being the slave of hell, had rendered her the happy slave of Mary. (*Father Rheo.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary.)

Let us give to the Blessed Virgin some external marks of our respect. Saint Elizabeth, queen of Hungary, eight days before each Feast of the Blessed Virgin, bent the knee a thousand times a day, saying the "Hail Mary" every time.

It is also a holy practice to have wax tapers burned before the altars of the Blessed Virgin. This custom is

very ancient in the Church, and heaven has shown by miracles how acceptable it was. Of this we have convincing proof in the case of that religious of whom Sophronius speaks. That holy solitary lived in a cave, ten leagues from Jerusalem. It was his pious custom, every time he went out, to light a taper before an image of the Mother of God, which he had placed at the further end of his cave, begging her to take care of it herself. Although he was sometimes absent for six months, he always found his taper, on his return, precisely as he had left it at his departure.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(Paraphrase on the *Salve Regina*.)

O Mary, my refuge! how many times have I not, through my own fault, seen myself the slave of hell! Thou hast broken my bonds, thou hast snatched me from the hands of mine enemies; but I tremble lest I shall fall into them again, for I know that their rage is insatiable, and that they flatter themselves I shall again become their prey. Holy Virgin, be my shield and my defence; with thy assistance I am sure to conquer; but grant me that I may never forget to invoke thee in my conflicts with the enemy, and especially in the last, the most terrible of all, when the devil shall lie in wait for me at my last hour. Do thou thyself then imprint thy name on my lips, and on my heart, that I may expire pronouncing that name, and find myself at thy feet in heaven. Amen.

FIFTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF MARY,
NINETEENTH OF MARCH.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE DEVOTION OF MAKING VOWS AND PILGRIMAGES IN HONOR OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“Lift up thy eyes round about, and see; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side.”—*Is.*, chap. lx. 5.

THE devotion of making vows and pilgrimages in honor of the Blessed Virgin is very ancient, and very respectable in the Church. To prove how agreeable it must be to the Mother of God, let us enter into the temples which are consecrated to her, and we shall see them filled with august testimonials bearing witness to the infinite bounty of Mary to those who accomplished the vows they had made to her, to obtain from God, by her intercession, some special grace, whether in the execution of some perilous enterprise, or deliverance from some spiritual or corporal suffering.

In both kinds we find illustrious examples of vows made to the Queen of heaven and earth—that is to say, to the sovereign dispenser of all good and the powerful deliverer from all evils. The first and most touching is that of Louis XIII., surnamed the Just. Never was any one more visibly protected by the Blessed Virgin, nor more devoted to her service, than that religious monarch: the reduction of La Rochelle is a sensible proof of it. The heresy of Calvin had already been for nearly a century established in France. It was so elated by

having La Rochelle for its bulwark, that it seemed impossible that it could be exterminated; when the Mother of God, seconding the designs of the religious monarch, made use of the very projects of her enemies to give him a more glorious triumph. There was universal consternation when it was known that on the 20th of July, 1527, there had appeared before the isle of Rhé an English fleet of over a hundred and twenty sail, drawn thither by the promise which the heretics had made the English to admit them into the kingdom. A powerful army, the communications they had in France, the little preparations that had been made to oppose their forces, the illness of the king, for whom fears were entertained, all seemed to promise them a happy issue for their enterprise. So many adverse circumstances would undoubtedly have subdued the courage of any other than that great prince, whose confidence in God and the Blessed Virgin never appeared with more splendor. He addressed himself, as usual, to the Mother of God, and made a vow to go to our Lady of Saumur, as well for the recovery of his health as for the success of his arms. He was not deceived in his expectations; for on the day of the Assumption he found himself entirely cured of the double-tertian fever which had endangered his life, and his affairs began to wear a more favorable aspect. It was remarked that on the day when he received communion in the church of Our Lady, the first reinforcement entered the fort of Saint Martin, which was the beginning of success for France. After some time, the place being hard pressed, the king again addressed himself to his protectress, who immediately granted him the effect of his prayer. Penetrated with gratitude, he went on foot to receive holy com-

munion at the church of Our Lady of Virtues, more than a league distant from Paris. This piety and devotion brought tears to the eyes of all who witnessed them, and the accomplishment of a vow so holy brought the blessings of Heaven on his arms: the enemy was obliged to retire in disorder, abandoning their baggage and munitions of war to the conqueror, and leaving the island covered with their dead. That route was followed by the reduction of Rochelle, after a siege of thirteen months. Louis the Just had no sooner entered into that rebellious city than, to show his gratitude to his protectress, he ordered a magnificent church to be built there under the name of *Our Lady of Victory*, and he himself laid the first stone.

Every one knows the vow made to the Blessed Virgin by Anne of Austria, Queen of France, wife of Louis XIII., to obtain from heaven the grace of fecundity, and the birth of a prince for the support of the throne. The result of that vow was the birth of Louis XIV., the wonder of his age, under whom France became the most flourishing kingdom on earth.

The devotion of making vows in honor of the Blessed Virgin is, therefore, most acceptable to her, since she rewards it with such bounty and magnificence; but it is proper never to make any vow without first consulting a prudent and enlightened confessor, so that his advice may be strictly followed in every thing, remembering that obedience is better than sacrifice, and that he whom God has charged to direct us in the way of salvation is to tell us, on his part, what is best for us to do to please him.

What has been said as to vows may apply to pious pilgrimages, undertaken more especially to honor our

Lady in certain places where it is believed that she is particularly pleased to receive homage. Mary herself approves this practice by the choice she has made of some privileged sanctuaries which she specially favors with her protection, and amongst which, numerous as they are, we shall mention only that of Our Lady of the Angels, so venerable because of the great number of pilgrims who visit it, and the graces of all kinds which the Queen of heaven there pours forth.

It is situated near Assisi, in the Duchy of Spoleto, in the Papal States, in Italy. It was a little chapel of which a holy priest of Assisi was chaplain, who, having learned that St. Francis desired to establish himself there to make it the cradle of the order he had just instituted, ceded it to him with pleasure. The wonders which that good priest told him of the sanctity of the place and the miracles wrought there by the Blessed Virgin made it very dear to him, especially after a laborer, who cultivated a little field close by, had told him that the chapel was often filled with lights, and that melodious music was heard in it, which made him give it the name of "Our Lady of the Angels." St. Francis was no sooner in possession of the chapel than he resolved to pass the night there, to recommend his infant order to the Blessed Virgin. As he was in the fervor of prayer, the chapel was suddenly filled with a celestial light; the Saviour, accompanied by his holy Mother, appeared on the altar, surrounded by an innumerable multitude of blessed spirits, and declared to that holy patriarch how agreeable the place was to him. It needed no more to make it the sole delight of St. Francis, so that when he was dying he ordered his brethren thenceforth to depend immediately on the general who would himself

select the friars destined to honor the Blessed Virgin there. It was there that he received so many graces from heaven, and that, three years before his death, he obtained from our Lord, at the prayer of his holy Mother, a plenary indulgence for all those who should visit that chapel on the day of "Our Lady of the Angels;" an indulgence which Pope Honorius III. and several of his successors have since confirmed, and also granted for all the churches of the religious of the order of St. Francis. It is this indulgence which is called the *Portiuncula*, for the reason that St. Francis having begged the Blessed Virgin to obtain from her Son the same grace for all those who should enter into his order, Mary replied that it would be granted only to those who should come to visit that place, which the holy founder considered as a very small portion, *Portiuncula*.

From that period the chapel of Our Lady of Angels has not ceased to be frequented by all sorts of persons, who make pilgrimages thither from all parts of Europe and the Christian world. The marvels that are wrought there, as in all the other temples wherein Mary has chosen to receive particular homage, sensibly prove that the devotion of making pilgrimages is acceptable to her. But let those who visit these sacred asylums, in which our divine Mother is pleased to manifest her goodness and mercy, take good heed! Pilgrimages must only be made with pure intentions, and with the sole view of honoring Mary more particularly.

Let us beware, then, of making them with dispositions that cannot be approved. For then it is not Mary who would be honored; it is the devil, who would gain all the fruit of those visits to the Mother of God. When we have the pious design of visiting some sanctuary dedi-

cated to the Blessed Virgin, we should ever avoid the crowd, so as not to lose our devotion or recollection, and consequently the graces granted by that Mother of Goodness in the places where we go to pay our respects to her as children devoted to her worship and her service.

EXAMPLE.

History of the Miraculous Translation of the Blessed Virgin's House from Nazareth to Loretto, commonly called "Our Lady of Loretto."

Of all the sanctuaries in which Mary delights to be honored by her devoted servants, there is undoubtedly none more celebrated than that of "Our Lady of Loretto." The following is an abridged history of its miraculous translation :

The Turks having got possession of Judea, the town of Nazareth, situated in that tribe of Juda, of course fell into their power. Every one knows that it was at Nazareth Mary dwelt when the angel Gabriel came from God to announce to her the great mystery of the incarnation of the divine Word. But that house was too august, too holy, to be in the possession of infidels, after having been inhabited by the Son of God and his divine Mother; hence it was, that, in 1291, it was transported by angels from Nazareth to Sclavonia. The Sclavonians not having sufficiently esteemed the treasure they possessed, had it but three years and nine months, at the end of which time it was carried into the March of Ancona, near the town of Recanati, in the field of a holy widow named Lauretta—whence its name of Lorette in French, and Loretto in English—and thence to a hill about a mile and a half from the field, where it still stands.

Father Turselinus has written a history of the house of Loretto, in which he gives the most satisfactory reasons which clearly prove that miraculous translation.

All the Popes from Pius II. have spoken of it; Pope Clement VII., to assure himself of the reality and conformity of the facts, dispatched to Nazareth three of his intimate friends, men of strict integrity and profound learning. These pious deputies recognized that the chamber transported by the angels to three different stations was but one of the rooms comprising the entire house inhabited by the Blessed Virgin, being that in which she received the salutation of the angel Gabriel. All the dimensions of that chamber were recognized as exactly corresponding with those of the place whereon it had evidently stood. It was, furthermore, attested by mineralogists that the stones of which the edifice of Our Lady of Loretto was constructed were exactly of the same nature with those of the house at Nazareth.

Benedict XIV., in his beautiful work on the Feast of Mary, thus expresses himself: "This apartment in which the divine Word took flesh was transported by the ministry of angels, in proof whereof are all monuments, constant tradition, the testimony of the Sovereign Pontiffs, and the miracles unceasingly wrought there."

Theophilus Raynaud, and the learned Catholic doctors, such as Canisius, Turrian, and Gresser, have also proved that translation by invincible reasons, and victoriously refuted Aunoy de Verger, D'Hospinieu, and other Protestants who have denied it, as well as the Calvinists Theodore Beza and the elder David, who called that holy house "the Idol of Loretto." The same Father Turselin and other most respectable authors relate the miracle, which has been confirmed by Peter George, John Boni-

face, and Jerome Angelita, and cited by Benedict XIV.; he says that "even heretics entering that holy house are converted, and openly censure the impiety of those who deny the miracle." At Loretto is seen and venerated with the most profound respect the wooden cup that was used by the Blessed Virgin when she was at Nazareth, a truly miraculous cup.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Gertrude.)

Specially honor the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, which does so much honor to Mary. Saint Gertrude having addressed herself to the Blessed Virgin, on the day of the Annunciation, in order to learn how she might best celebrate that festival, she ordered her to recite the Hail Mary 277 times every day during the octave, to honor the number of days during which she had carried in her womb the incarnate Word; that practice pleasing her no less than if she had served her during those nine months.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By the pious Author of "*Memoriale Vitæ Sacerdotalis*.")

O Virgin thrice blessed, receive me for thy servant, as thou hast already received me for a son at the foot of the cross. Show thyself my Mother, by inflaming me with love and piety for thee! O powerful Virgin, who hast crushed the infernal dragon, crush my passions, break the chain of my vices!

O holy Virgin, at whose will the treasures of heaven are dispensed, obtain for me those graces which thou

knowest are most useful to me ! Obtain for me a lively faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity, and the gift of prayer ! Grant me purity, humility, contempt of the world, and a great zeal for the salvation of the souls of my fellow-creatures. Amen.

FIFTY-NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE APOSTLES ST. PETER AND
ST. PAUL, 29TH JUNE.

INSTRUCTION : MARY IS THE PROTECTRESS, THE COMFORTER,
AND THE LIBERATOR OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

“I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.”—*Eccclus.*, chap. xxiv.

It seems that, after death, there is no further grace to hope for, and that the time of mercy is past. Yes, doubtless, the time of mercy is past; but the time of the suffrages of Mary is not past. The bounds of life are neither the limits of her credit, nor the term of her favors. Her love, stronger than death, crosses the ramparts of the tomb, and penetrates even to the depths of the abyss; new wants, new succor; her tenderness arms itself with all power, and works a prodigy till then unknown to the creature. After the example of Jesus Christ, who, by the strength of his power, draws forth from limbo the souls of the ancient just, Mary, by the strength of her intercession, withdraws from purgatory the souls of her dear children, and transports them on the wings of her love to the celestial country.

Let us demonstrate this subject by documents furnished by the most commendable authors.

Saint Bernardine of Sienna, speaking of the Blessed Virgin as the protectress of the souls in purgatory, says "she has a certain power over that prison in which the divine justice purifies the members of Jesus Christ;" and to prove it, he applies to Mary these words of the fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, "I have walked in the waves of the sea;" comparing to the waves in general the pains of purgatory, because they are temporary, and to the waves of the sea, because they are as bitter. Now, Mary descends into those dark abysses, and walks over those most bitter waters, to console her children and soften their torments. "It is very important, then," as Novarinus remarks, "faithfully to serve that great Lady, since, after having assisted her servants during their life through all the dangers to which they are exposed, she remembers them with still greater solicitude when they are in the flames; and although that tender Mother succors all the souls in purgatory, yet she more especially lends her aid to those who have been most devoted to her during their life."

This is what Mary herself made known to St. Bridget, when she told her, "I am the mother of all the souls in purgatory, for the pains they endure to satisfy the divine justice are constantly alleviated by my intercession. (*Lib. 4, Rev. 131.*) "So," continues Denis the Carthusian, "as soon as the holy name of Mary resounds in that abode of sorrow, it becomes a solace, like that which a poor sick person receives from words of consolation." "And her prayers," adds Novarinus, "are to the suffering souls like a dew that descends upon the flames, and tempers their intolerable heat. But it is little to relieve

and to protect her children in purgatory: Mary also breaks their bonds, and becomes their liberator."

It would be easy to prove this consoling truth by speaking only of the immense love and unlimited tenderness which Mary feels for her servants in all the situations in which they can require her assistance; but it is better to give more direct proofs of it, drawn from the following examples, so glorious to Mary in her quality of liberatrix of the souls in purgatory.

A pious tradition informs us, and the celebrated Chancellor Gerson has left it in writing, that on the day of the triumphant assumption of the Blessed Virgin, purgatory remained empty, Mary having, at the moment of her death, solicited and obtained from her Son the favor of entering heaven accompanied by all the souls detained in that place of expiation. "Then," says Saint Bernardine of Sienna, "she was put in possession of the privilege of delivering her faithful servants from the pains of purgatory." And Novarinus adds that, "by the merits of Mary, the pains of those souls are not only assuaged, but also abridged."

Saint Peter Damian relates, that a certain Marosia appeared, after death, to a person of her acquaintance, and told her that, on the day of the assumption of the Blessed Virgin, she had been delivered from purgatory, with an infinite number of other souls, whose number exceeded the population of the city of Rome.

Saint Denis the Carthusian assures us that the same thing takes place on the Feasts of the Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that on those solemn days, Mary, accompanied by many legions of angels, descends into purgatory and delivers from it a multitude of souls.

Happy, then, and a thousand times happy, are the

servants of Mary, since, after having protected, assisted, and accompanied them during their life, she follows them even into purgatory, where she consoles them, and whence she often delivers them ! Let us hope that if we have the happiness of faithfully serving that Mother of mercy, she will not leave us without assistance after our death, if, obliged to satisfy the divine justice, we are condemned to the flames of purgatory; but we shall avoid that misfortune if we have a true and constant devotion to the Blessed Virgin. And why should we not ourselves hope for the signal favor of going, through her mercy, straight to heaven, if during our life we have paid her a special homage, and have loved her with a true affection?

EXAMPLE.

Consoling History of the Appearance of the Blessed Virgin to Pope John XXII.

Father Croiset, in the second volume of his "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin," gives an extract from the Bull of Pope John XXII., issued in 1316, on occasion of the apparition with which that sovereign Pontiff was favored by Mary, who addressed to him these words, so consoling to the servants of that great Queen—words relating exclusively to the confraternities of the Scapular, but applicable also to those of her dear children who put their whole confidence in her.

"I," said that charitable protectress and liberator of the souls in purgatory, "I, who am the Mother of mercy, I will descend on the Saturday after their death, and deliver all those whom I shall find in purgatory, and I will conduct them to the holy mountain of eternal life." That same Bull was renewed by the same Pope in 1322; and in both he relates in detail the object and the circum-

stances of the apparition with which the Blessed Virgin had deigned to honor him, commanding him to publish her glorious title of Liberator of the souls of her servants when they are detained in purgatory. Finally, that same Bull has been successively published by Alexander V., Nicholas V., Sixtus IV., Julius II., Clement VII., Paul IV., Pius V., Gregory XIII., Sixtus V., Gregory XIV., Clement VIII., Paul V., Gregory XV., Urban VIII., Alexander VII., Clement X., Innocent XI., Benedict XIII., and Clement XII. Certain it is that twenty sovereign Pontiffs would not have confirmed the Bull of their predecessor, John XXII., if they had not believed that the apparition of the Blessed Virgin therein related was incontestable.

• PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Bridget.)

Pray for the souls in purgatory, especially for those who have been most devoted to the Blessed Virgin. She declared to St. Bridget that she was the mother of those holy souls, and that nothing could be done more acceptable in her sight than to help them to be sooner delivered from their pains.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bernard, *On the Salve Regina.*)

O Mary, generous towards the needy, compassionate to those who invoke thee, and gentle to all those who love thee! O Virgin, merciful to the penitent, full of goodness to the just, and sweet to those who contemplate thee, clement in delivering, bountiful in thy liberality, charitable when thou givest to those who seek thee! deign to make us feel the effects of thy charity, thy goodness, and thy liberality. Amen.

SIXTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK, THE FEAST OF
OUR LADY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS.

INSTRUCTION : THE SORROWS WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN SUFFERED RENDERED HER THE QUEEN OF MARTYRS, BECAUSE HER MARTYRDOM WAS THE LONGEST AND MOST GRIEVOUS OF ALL.

“Attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”—
Lam. Jer.

SINCE Jesus Christ calls himself the King of martyrs and of sorrows, because he suffered in his life more than all other martyrs, Mary may be called the Queen of martyrs. She merited that title by suffering the most terrible martyrdom that could be endured after that of her divine Son. It is incontestable that Mary suffered a true martyrdom, since to be a martyr it suffices to endure pain capable of giving death, although it may not really do so. Saint John the Evangelist is revered as a martyr, although he did not die in the cauldron of boiling oil. To have the glory of martyrdom it suffices that we obey the law, even to the point of being ready to give up our life. “Mary was a martyr,” says Saint Bernard, “not by the steel of the executioner, but by the grief of her heart; if her body did not fall beneath the blows of the executioner, her heart was pierced with grief at sight of the Passion of her Son, and that grief was sufficient to have given her a thousand deaths. Mary was not only a martyr, but her martyrdom surpassed all others, since it was more prolonged; and her whole life was, so to say, a continual death.

"The Passion of Jesus Christ," says Saint Bernard, "commenced at his birth." Mary, who was in all things like her Son, in like manner suffered her martyrdom during the whole course of her life. The name of Mary, amongst other significations, means "bitter sea;" and as the sea is all bitter, so the life of Mary was always filled with bitterness by the one thought of the Redeemer's Passion, which was ever present to her mind. There is no doubt that, enlightened by the light of the Holy Ghost, beyond all the prophets, she also understood, better than they, those predictions which they made in regard to the Messiah, and which were found in the holy Scriptures.

Mary, comprehending the full extent of the torments which the incarnate Word was to suffer for the salvation of men, began when, and even before she became his mother, to feel a lively compassion for that Saviour who was to suffer so ignominious a death; and from that moment her martyrdom is dated.

That grief was immeasurably increased when Mary was made Mother of the Saviour. The Abbé Rupert says, that "the thought of all that her Son might have to suffer was for her a life-long martyrdom."

"Souls redeemed by the precious blood of my Son," says Mary to the faithful—"my beloved children, it is not sufficient to compassionate my sufferings, during the brief space of time in which I witnessed the death of my Son, my dear Jesus. The sword of grief, which Saint Simeon predicted for me, pierced my heart all my life. When I warmed my Son, when I pressed him in my arms, and thought of the cruel death that awaited him, judge how great and how continual was the grief that rent my heart!"

Mary could well apply to herself those words of David: "I have passed my life amidst sorrow and tears, since I never for a moment lost sight of the death of torment which my beloved Son was to suffer."

After the ascension of her Son, the memory of the Passion was ever present and ever renewed in the heart of Mary; so that it is quite true to say, that her whole life was one constant and continual sorrow.

Time, which calms the grief of afflicted persons, far from alleviating that of Mary, on the contrary did but increase it—because, in proportion as Jesus grew in age, he always appeared to her more beautiful and more amiable; and, as the time of his death grew still nearer, the pain of losing him increased proportionately in the heart of Mary. As the rose grows in the midst of thorns, so Mary grew in age amid pain and suffering; and, as in proportion as the rose grows the thorns also increase, so the more Mary advanced in age, the more her griefs grew with her. But not only was the martyrdom of Mary longer than that of all the other martyrs, it was also the most painful of all. Who, in fact, could measure its greatness? It seems, truly, that the prophet Jeremiah knew not to whom to compare that Mother of Sorrows, when he considered the unspeakable pain she endured at the death of her Son. "And if God had not, by a special miracle," says Saint Anselm, "preserved the life of Mary, her grief would have sufficed to cause her death every moment she lived." "The grief of Mary was so great," adds Saint Bernardine of Sienna, "that if it were divided among all creatures, it would suffice to kill them all instantaneously."

Let us examine why the martyrdom of Mary was more painful than that of all the other martyrs. The

martyrs suffered, in their bodies, the torments of sword and fire. Mary suffered in her soul, according to the prediction of Simeon. Now, by as much as the soul surpasses the body in nobleness, by so much the grief of Mary surpassed that of other martyrs; for, according to the reflection of Saint Catherine of Sienna, there can be no comparison between the sufferings of the soul and those of the body. "At the death of the Saviour upon Calvary, there might have been seen two great altars—one in the body of Jesus Christ, the other in the heart of Mary. Whilst the Son sacrificed his flesh by death, the Mother sacrificed her soul by compassion."

The other martyrs suffered, in sacrificing their own lives; but the Blessed Virgin suffered in sacrificing the life of her Son, which she loved much more than her own life. Not only did she suffer in her mind all that her Son suffered in his body, but the sight of her Son's pains afflicted her heart more than if she had herself endured those pains. There can be no doubt that Mary suffered in her heart all the torments she saw her Son Jesus endure. The sufferings of the son became those of the mother. Saint Augustine says of the mother of the Machabees, present at the death of her seven sons, "that she suffered in her heart what they suffered in their bodies." So it was with Mary: all the torments, the lashes, the thorns, the nails, and the cross, which tortured the innocent flesh of Jesus, entered at the same time into the heart of Mary, to complete her martyrdom. Saint Amadeus says, that "the heart of Mary became as a mirror of the sufferings of her Son, in which were seen the bruises, the wounds—in a word, all that Jesus suffered. The wounds, spread over the body of Jesus, were united in the heart of Mary." And the same pious

author observes: "Mary was not only near the cross, but she was on the cross, crucified at the same time as her Son. Jesus Christ might well say, that in the work of redemption there was no man who took part in his sufferings. But there was one woman, and that was his holy Mother Mary, in the Passion of Jesus Christ, who suffered without relief. The martyrs, it is true, suffered horrible torments, but the love they had for Jesus Christ made them find their pains sweet and agreeable."

Saint Vincent, during his martyrdom, was tortured on the wooden horse—torn, burned; "but," says Saint Augustine, "he spoke to the tyrants with so much strength, and with such contempt of torments, that it seemed as though there were one Vincent who suffered, and another Vincent who spoke: because God sustained him in the midst of his sufferings by the sweetness of his love." Saint Bonifacé thanked God when he was enduring the most frightful torments. Saint Mark and Saint Marcellinus, when the tyrant urged them to escape from their torments by renouncing the faith, calmly replied: "Say, then, what are these pains to us? We assure you, we have never felt greater pleasure than in suffering all this for the sake of Jesus Christ." When Saint Lawrence was extended on the gridiron, the inward flame of divine love with which his heart was burning was more potent to console him than the external fire to consume him. But how was it, that, amidst such excruciating torments, and during that long agony, he could preserve so much coolness and contentment? "Ah!" replies Saint Augustine, "it was, that, being intoxicated with divine love, he felt neither torments nor death."

The more the martyrs loved Christ, the less they felt the torments of death; the very thought of God was suf-

ficient to console them; but could our good and tender Mother also console herself for the love and at the sight of her Son's pains? No, doubtless, since it was that same suffering Son that was the cause of all her grief, and the love she bore him was her most cruel tormentor. The martyrdom of Mary consisted in seeing her innocent and beloved Son overwhelmed with torments; the more she loved him the more bitter was her grief.

The martyrs are represented, each with the instrument of their martyrdom—Saint Paul with the sword, Saint Andrew with the cross, &c., &c.; so Mary is represented holding her dead Son in her arms, because it was Jesus alone who was the instrument of her martyrdom. It is certain that the greater the love, the greater also the pain in losing the beloved object. "Now," says Cornelius à Lapide, "to understand how great was the grief of Mary at the death of her Son, it would be necessary to understand how great was the love she bore him!" But who can measure such a love? In the heart of Mary were united supernatural love, to love Jesus as her God—and natural love, to love him as her Son: of these two loves one was formed, but that was an immense love; so that Mary loved Jesus to such a degree that no other creature was capable of loving in the same way. "Even," says Richard of Saint Lawrence, "even as there was no love like unto his, so neither was there grief like unto hers; as the love of Mary for her Son was immense, so her grief at losing him must also have been immense."

The Mother of God, at the foot of her dying Son's cross addresses to us these words: "Oh, you who live on this earth without participating in my grief, pause a moment to reflect upon it, whilst I am looking at that

beloved Son expiring before my eyes; see if amongst all those who are afflicted and tormented you can find grief like unto mine!" No, Mother of Sorrows, we cannot find grief more bitter than thine! Never was there in this world a son more amiable than Jesus, nor mother who loved her son more than Mary. If, then, there never was here below love like that of Mary, how could we expect to find sorrow like unto hers? It may well be said that the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin surpassed all the torments of the martyrs put together.

Saint Basil says that "as far as the sun exceeds in splendor all the planets, so far does Mary surpass in suffering all the other martyrs." The grief which that tender mother endured in the Passion of her Son was so great that she alone could worthily compassionate the death of a God-man.

But why, O Mary, wouldst thou also thus sacrifice thyself on Calvary? Was it not enough for a crucified God to redeem us? Was it necessary that thou who art his Mother, should be crucified with him? Yes, doubtless, the death of Jesus was more than sufficient to save the world, and even an infinity of worlds; but that good Mother, filled with love for us, would also, by the merit of her sorrows offered for us on Calvary, co-operate in the work of our salvation. "We owe a vast debt of gratitude," says the blessed Albinus, "to Jesus who vouchsafed to suffer for our redemption, and we likewise owe it to Mary for the martyrdom which she was pleased to endure spontaneously for us, at the death of her Son. That compassionate Mother preferred to suffer all sorts of pains rather than leave souls under the slavery of Satan and without redemption." The sole consolation of Mary, in the midst of such great grief, was to see that

the death of her Son was going to redeem the world and reconcile men with God.

Such is the tender and inexpressible love which Mary has borne to us; let us requite her by returning a sincere and effective love! For in the midst, and at the height of her sufferings on Calvary, she saw, in God, our souls and all that her divine Son suffered for us. Let us avail ourselves, then, of the merits of so many sufferings! Let our meditation be fruitful for time and especially for eternity.

EXAMPLE.

Advantages derived from devotion to the sorrows of Mary.

A sinner, amongst other crimes, had killed his father and one of his brothers, and was wandering through the world. The wretched man having heard a sermon on the mercy of God, went to confession to the preacher. The latter having heard the terrible account of his crimes, sent him to an altar of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, that he might beseech her to obtain for him the grace of contrition and of pardon for his sins; the sinner goes there, commences his prayer, and expires there on the following day. The priest recommending the people to pray for the soul of the deceased, a dove was seen to fly into the Church and let fall a note, in which were found the following words: "That soul was scarcely out of the body when it went straight to heaven; and you, do you still continue to preach the mercy of God, and devotion to the sorrows of Mary, as a most efficacious means for obtaining its happy effects. (*Father Nieremberg, after Saint Alphonso Liguori.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF THE SORROWS OF MARY.

(By Saint Veronica.)

Meditate often upon the Sorrows of Mary; that practice is essentially pleasing to her. Jesus Christ himself reveals to the blessed Veronica, that the tears shed over his Passion are agreeable to him, but that, by an effect of the immense love which he has for his Mother, he prefers that the faithful should meditate on what she suffered whilst he was fastened to the cross. Enrol yourself, then, if you have not already done so, in some confraternity specially consecrated to honoring the Sorrows of Mary; you assuredly will not fail to experience the effects of that devotion. Frequently, what we cannot obtain from God by any other means, we receive from his bounty by this holy practice.

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS.

(By St. Alphonso Liguori.)

O afflicted Virgin, O soul great in virtues as in sorrows, both the one and the other spring from that great fire of love burning in thy heart for God, the only love of thy heart. Ah! my Mother, have pity on me, who have not loved God, and who have so greatly offended him! Thy sorrows, it is true, assure me of pardon, but that is not sufficient. I wish to love my God. Who could obtain for me that grace if not thou, who art the mother of holy love? Ah! Mary, thou consolest every one, vouchsafe, then, also to console me. Amen.

SIXTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY—1ST OF NOVEMBER.

INSTRUCTION : THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS GIVEN TO US AS A MODEL.

“You shall imitate the pattern that has been shown you.”—*Exod.*, chap. xxvi., v. 26, 30.

ALTHOUGH we have already detailed the twelve principal virtues of the Blessed Virgin, so as to be able, in practising them, to consecrate to her the twelve months of the year, it is good, nevertheless, to give an instruction on those same virtues, so as to show, in one condensed picture, that she has been given to us for a model, in whatever state, in whatever rank, and in whatever condition divine Providence has placed us ; for she is a true model for all men to follow, and under all relations, by all the virtues of which she gave us such touching examples in the course of her life.

However, the question is not here of each particular virtue of the Mother of God. It suffices only to say, with Saint Ambrose, that “she is the model of all the virtues that we should take for the rule of our conduct.” She had the faith of the patriarchs; the zeal of the apostles; the constancy of the martyrs; the purity of the virgins; the most ardent charity; the most profound humility; the most tried and courageous patience; the most perfect resignation to the will of God. “For God having chosen a mother,” says Saint Augustine, “he must have chosen one whose virtues were not com-

mon, but heroic, and more perfect than those of all other creatures." So whatever virtue you may desire to practise, you will find the model of it in the Blessed Virgin; and there is this difference between Mary and the other Saints, that the latter have excelled in some particular virtues by which they were characterized, whereas the Blessed Virgin had them all in a sovereign degree; but, as in that assemblage of all the virtues of Mary, some were more conspicuous, and appear to be more within our reach, let us endeavor to form a just idea of them, to put them in practice hereafter.

The first is purity: a virtue which the Blessed Virgin had so much at heart, that, according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, "if to be Mother of God it had been necessary that Mary should cease to be a virgin, she would have preferred virginity to the divine Maternity." It was for this reason that, when the angel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, she appeared troubled by it, on account of the vow of virginity she had previously made.

But if Mary was so commendable by her purity, she was no less illustrious by her humility. "This it was," says Saint Bernard, "that made her Mother of God." She always cherished that virtue so tenderly, that she practised it in her earliest years, having always had so little self-esteem that, although her merits raised her above all those who were consecrated with her to the service of the Temple, she, nevertheless, regarded herself as the last of all; and, as the most certain proof of true humility is to preserve a low opinion of one's self in the midst of men, where it is easy to allow one's self to be dazzled by the vain show of greatness, it is by that mark that we the more clearly perceive how pro-

found was the humility of the Blessed Virgin, at the very time when the angel brought her the happy tidings of the choice which the Blessed Trinity made of her to be the Mother of the Saviour. She designates herself as a slave and a servant; the more the angel exalts her, the more she humbles herself, and the more she is penetrated with her own nothingness. If her cousin Saint Elizabeth praises her faith, calling her blessed for having believed the words of the angel, Mary at the same time attributes all to God, recognizing in herself only her lowliness, she on whom the Lord had seen fit to cast his eyes, to make his omnipotence appear with so much splendor as the instrument which he made use of was weaker.

The third virtue of the Blessed Virgin, and the one which is most within our reach, is patience. To judge of it, we have only to consider the various occasions on which she had to practice it. First, the destitution and penury in which she found herself at the birth of the Saviour of the world, then the flight into Egypt, then the sojourn she was reluctantly obliged to make in that strange land, the poverty in which she passed her whole life, the knowledge she had from the moment of the Incarnation of the ignominious death of her Son, and the sufferings she underwent during the Passion. Her whole life, in a word, was full of the hardest trials, in all of which she manifested an unshaken constancy, and a perfect resignation to the will of God. She remained standing at the foot of the cross, herself offering to the Eternal Father her beloved Son, for the salvation of men.

Who could explain the liveliness of Mary's faith, since she believed, on the word of the angel, that the Maternity would not sully her virginity, how incompatible soever those two qualities were! Who could describe

the firmness of her hope, since it never could be shaken throughout all the vicissitudes of her life ! Was it necessary to go into Egypt, a country unknown to her, and in which she foresaw that she would be without support, without means, without assistance from men ? She goes thither, and dwells there with as much tranquillity as though she were to find every thing there in abundance, convinced, as she was, that Providence would provide for all. The Apostles, who had hoped that their master would rise again, lost that confidence on the third day. Mary alone remained firm in the hope she had of the resurrection of her Son ; but what is still more incomprehensible is the ardent charity which glowed in her heart all her life : it surpasses that of the Seraphim and Cherubim.

These virtues we may practise in whatever situation we may find ourselves placed in, as well as obedience and love of purity, which were especially cherished by the Mother of God, and the object of her delight. It was obedience that made Mary undertake the journey to Bethlehem. She did it only to obey the edict of the emperor. It was through love of obedience that she subjected herself to the law of Purification, although it was not binding on her. From the same motive she quitted Bethlehem, to retire into Egypt. As regards poverty, she embraced it with courage and resignation, as her whole life incontestibly proves. She married a poor artisan, with whom she was obliged to live, by the labor of his hands.

Arrived at Bethlehem, she was forced to retire to a stable, being unable to procure a lodging on account of her extreme poverty. The offering she made in the Temple, on the day of her Purification, was that usually

made by the poor. Finally, her indigence was so great, that, when it was necessary to bury her Son, she had not wherewith to do so.

Such are the principal virtues of which Mary has given us the example. They are within our reach; and we ought to practice them, if we would find within ourselves any traits of that divine model, which has been set before us only that we may gain the rewards promised to her imitators.

EXAMPLE.

The true imitators of Mary.

Saint Alphonso Liguori, in his paraphrase on the *Salve Regina*, translated from the Italian, has brought together the names of the most zealous servants of Mary, who have the most ardently loved her. Love is the finest effect of imitation: it is fitting, then, to show, after this article, how tenderly Mary is beloved by her true imitators.

Saint Stanislaus Kotska never spoke of his love for Mary, but the ardor of his flame communicated itself to his auditors. He invented new names to honor her; he asked her blessing at the beginning of all his actions; he prayed to her, as though he spoke to her, face to face. Finally, he loved her as his Mother, and was like an angel come down from heaven to preach her love. The blessed Herman loved Mary so affectionately, that he sought to imitate her in all things. Hence that good Mother honored him with the name of spouse.

Saint Philip Neri was wont to call Mary "his dear delight;" and Saint Bernard called her the "ravisher of

hearts." Saint Aloysius Gonzaga had such a love for Mary, that her very name made his heart throb, and his cheeks glow.

Saint Francis Solano carried his love for Mary so far, that, in a holy transport of love, he took a musical instrument, and went to play and sing before an image of the Blessed Virgin. "Fain would I have," said Father Diego Martinez, "the hearts of all the angels, and of all the saints, that I might love Mary as much as they love her. I would fain have at my disposal the lives of all men, that I might consecrate them to the service of Mary."

The son of Saint Bridget was accustomed to say, that "nothing in the world caused him more joy than to feel how much Mary was beloved by God;" adding, that "there was no torment to which he would not most willingly expose himself, to prevent that Queen of heaven from losing one degree of her greatness."

Alphonso Rodriguez desired to give his life in testimony of the love he bore to Mary. Saint Radegonde, wife of King Clotaire, had engraved on her breast, with an iron needle, the sweet name of Mary; and two of her servants, Augustin Espinosa and Baptiste Arguenta, had it stamped on theirs with a red-hot iron. (*From the Glories of Mary.* Turin edition, 1827.)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Gertrude.)

Celebrate the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin devoutly. To persuade ourselves how acceptable that practice is to the Mother of God, we need only read what is related in the tenth chapter of the Revelations of Saint Ger-

trude. That saint, assisting at mass on the day of the Assumption, saw Our Lady, who had under her mantle a great number of young girls of rare beauty. She informed her that those were the souls of those who had taken most care to celebrate that festival.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Bonaventure.)

Grant, O Mary, that my heart may ever burn, and my soul ever consume itself for thee! Jesus my Saviour, and Mary my tender Mother, grant me by your merits to love thee as much as you are worthy to be loved! O God, who hast loved men so as to be willing to die for thine enemies, canst thou refuse to him, who so earnestly demands it, the grace of loving thee and thy holy Mother?

SIXTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY, 25TH DECEMBER.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN HEAVEN.

"The king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne; and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."—*III. Kings*, chap. ii.

"As the mind of man," says Saint Bernard, "cannot comprehend the immense glory that God has prepared in heaven for those who have loved him on earth, as the

apostle declares, who can ever conceive what glory he prepared for her who gave him birth; for his Mother who, from the first moment she was created, loved him more than all men and all angels together?" The Church, then, is right in singing that "Mary has been raised in heaven above all the choirs of angels," since she loved God more than all the blessed saints have loved him. "Yes," says Saint Bernard, "Mary has been raised above the angels, so that she sees above her only her Son, who is the divine Word." "According to Saint Thomas," says Chancellor Gerson, "all the orders of the angels and saints are distinguished into three hierarchies." Saint Denis adds that "Mary forms in heaven a separate hierarchy, the most sublime of all, and the second after God; and as the mistress is incomparably different from the servants, so is the glory of Mary incomparably greater than that of the angels. To comprehend this it suffices to hear David, who says that that queen was placed on the right hand of the King—"The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing." (*Ps. xliv.*)

"It is certain," says Saint Ildefonso, "that her good works have surpassed those of all the Saints."

"The glory of Mary," says Father de la Colombière, "very different from that of all the other Saints, was a full and perfect glory." It is true that all the blessed enjoy a great peace and a full contentment in heaven; nevertheless, it will always be true to say that none of them enjoys there the same glory as Mary. Undoubtedly, sins committed, time lost, cause no trouble there; but must not one experience there a purer gratification in remembering that they have done more good, preserved their innocence, and better employed their time? Mary in heaven desires nothing, and has nothing to desire;

whereas there is no Saint in Paradise, except Mary, who can say that he never committed any sin.

Mary, according to the definition of the holy Council of Trent, not only never committed any fault or semblance of a fault—not only never lost grace or tarnished it in any respect, but she was never idle, never did any action that was not meritorious, never said any word or harbored a thought that was not directed to the greater glory of God; in one word, Mary never grew cold, never paused one moment in her progress towards God, and never lost any thing by neglect; she unceasingly corresponded with grace with all her strength, and loved as much as she could.

“Graces have been various in the Saints,” says the apostle; “each of them, in correspondence with grace received, excelled in some virtue. One labored for the salvation of souls, the other led a penitential life; this one a contemplative life, that one braved torments: their glory in heaven differs according to their merits. The apostles are distinguished from the martyrs, the confessors from the virgins, the innocents from the penitents; the Blessed Virgin, having been filled with all graces, was also more elevated in all sorts of virtues than each saint in particular; she taught the apostles, and was the queen of the martyrs, since she suffered more than they; she was the first of the virgins, the model of married persons; she had perfect innocence united with perfect mortification; in a word, “she possessed all virtues”

The glory of Mary as far surpasses that of all the Saints as the brightness of the sun surpasses that of all the stars; at the coming of the sun, the light of the stars disappears as though they no longer existed; in like

manner, Mary so obscures all the splendor of angels and of men, that they scarcely appear in heaven. The blessed participate in some degree in the glory of God; but the Blessed Virgin is so enriched by it, that it seems that a creature cannot be more closely united to him than Mary is. "Our Queen," says Albert the Great, "contemplates God very closely, and incomparably more than all the other celestial spirits who receive from the sight of Mary a completion of splendor and content." The Mother of God, in ascending to heaven, increased the joy of its inhabitants: the blessed have no greater glory in heaven, after that which they receive from God, than to enjoy the sight of that admirable queen.

Let us rejoice, then, with Mary, on the high degree of glory which it has pleased God to bestow upon her in heaven. Let us rejoice in it, because she is our Mother, she is the nearest to God and the most closely united to the divine majesty; she best knows our miseries, most compassionates them, and is most powerful to assist us.

"What!" exclaims Saint Peter Damian, "because thou hast been raised to heaven, O blessed Virgin! wouldst thou have forgotten our state of misery?" The compassion and goodness which Mary had for us on earth were very great, but those sentiments have been much increased in heaven, where she is established as Queen of angels and of men.

Let us, then, devote ourselves to the service of Mary by honoring her and loving her with all our strength: "very different from the kings of the earth, she imposes upon her vassals neither burdens nor tributes; she enriches them with graces, with merits, and with rewards," says Richard of Saint Lawrence. Let us reanimate our faith and excite our confidence. "We have in heaven,"

says Saint Bernard, "a sovereign who is at the same time our Mother, an all-powerful mediatrix with the supreme Mediator, an advocate to whom the Redeemer can refuse no favor: behold the ladder of sinners, behold my great confidence, behold the whole foundation of my hope!"

EXAMPLE.

The city of Rome delivered from a great Calamity by the piety of Pope Saint Gregory the Great to Mary.

The Abbé Fleury, author of the Ecclesiastical History, relates the following fact which took place in Rome, under the Pontificate of Pope Saint Gregory the Great. "Never," says Fleury, "had so terrible a plague been seen; never had so cruel a pestilence existed; all remedies were useless. Every day, the disease carried off a vast number of persons of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions. Some died in paroxysms of sneezing, others yawning, and almost all without time for repentance. In vain had the pious Pontiff preached penance, ordered fasting and public prayers. At length, he had recourse entirely to Mary, whose image, painted by St. Luke, he was inspired to carry in procession through the streets of Rome. Oh, prodigy! Scarcely had the august likeness of the Mother of God been brought forth from its sanctuary when the disease suddenly ceased, so as to leave no doubt of such a miracle. At the same moment there was seen over Adrian's terrace, since called the Castle of Saint Angelo, an angel in human form, sheathing a bloody sword; and celestial spirits were heard singing that hymn of joyful gratitude in honor of Mary, *Regina cæli, lætare, alleluia*, to which the sovereign Pontiff added, *Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia*.

"The Church subsequently adopted that hymn to salute the Queen of heaven during the Paschal time, which is that of her joys." (*Fleury's Eccl. Hist.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Blessed Alphonso Rodriguez.)

Have the Hail Mary continually upon your lips. The learned Father Suarez said that he would give all for the merit of a single Hail Mary. The blessed Alphonso Rodriguez, a brother of the Society of Jesus, attained the highest perfection (the Church has since beatified him) only by reciting that touching prayer, which should be repeated every moment, but especially when we are exposed to some temptation of anger, impatience, &c.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Richard of St. Lawrence.)

O Mother of Mercy, thou art very near to God ! Established as Queen of the universe, seated on so lofty a throne, thou enjoyest the glory of thy Son ! Cast thine eyes upon us who are thy servants, and make us participate in the abundance which thou possessest. Thou art seated at the table of the Lord, and we, placed on earth as it were, under that divine table, we beseech thee to have pity upon our miseries, and to deliver us from them. Amen.

[For the feast of the proto-martyr, Saint Stephen, take the exercise intended for the Sunday after Pentecost, on which the feast of the Holy Rosary is solemnized.]

SIXTY-THIRD EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE, ADOPTED
 SON OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—27TH DECEMBER.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF MARY.

“Put me as a seal upon thy heart.”—*Cant.*, chap. viii.

THE devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus was closely followed by the devotion to the sacred heart of Mary. Thus it is that that divine Son ever shares with his divine Mother the honors paid to him in his Church.

Certainly, after the sacred heart of Jesus, the immaculate heart of Mary is the sweetest and most amiable object that can be proposed to the devotion of the faithful. This holy practice is spread throughout very many provinces of Christendom, where various confraternities have been established in honor of the sacred heart of Mary, and authorized by the Holy See, as appears by a bull of Pope Clement IX. of the 28th of April, 1668, fixing its festival on the 8th of February, and conceded to the prayer of the churches of Arles and Apt, in Provence, where the confraternity was already established; a confraternity to which the sovereign Pontiffs have granted several perpetual indulgences. What association, after that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is more appreciated? what confraternity more devout? what establishment more advantageous than the association consolidated under the title of the Sacred Heart of Mary, the asylum of sinners and the retreat of just souls? Happy are the towns the parishes, and the communities,

which possess so holy and so august a society, since there is none (always excepting those which relate to Jesus Christ) of which the object is more venerable than that of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

In fact, this sacred heart of Mary, ever virginal and ever immaculate, was the purest, the noblest, the greatest, holiest heart that the all-powerful hand of the Creator ever formed, after the adorable heart of Jesus. It is an inexhaustible source of bounty, of sweetness, of mercy, and of love; it is the model of all virtues. That sacred heart (the most perfect image of the heart of Jesus) always burned with the most ardent charity; it alone loved God more than all the seraphim together, and gave him more glory by the least of its affections than all creatures have given him by their most heroic actions. The heart of the Mother of the Redeemer, that august seat whereon mercy and justice have met together—it is that heart which has so vividly felt our miseries, which has formed so many ardent desires for our happiness, and which has suffered immense sorrows for our salvation.

That admirable heart deigns to accept our poor service. How happy, then, should we deem ourselves to be able to pay it all the homage of which our soul is capable! We should humbly thank it for the feelings of compassion and mercy with which it has so often been touched for us. Let us return thanks for all the benefits we have received from it—benefits that sprang from that unfathomable depth of goodness which is peculiar to it. It is in that heart, the first consecrated by the vow of virginity, that all pure souls find their delight. It is in honoring it, praising it, loving it, that they have learned from the Holy Ghost who guides them, that it is through that heart, the centre of predilection, that they must go

to Jesus Christ, whose greatest delight it has always been; and by it to pay all we owe to that God-man who derived from the immaculate heart of Mary all the blood wherewith he redeemed us. Those pure souls know that it is through the sacred heart of Mary that we must adore, love, serve, bless, praise, thank, and pray to God; that it is through it and in it we offer ourselves to God, and beg him to supply our poverty by the wealth of that heart, the delight of the Father, the object of the Son's love, the chosen dwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the sanctuary of the three adorable persons of the Holy Trinity.

That adorable and most amiable heart should, then, be the object of our veneration and our love. It is the way by which we should go to our Saviour, as it is by it that mercy will come to us. It should be our refuge and our consolation in all our sufferings. It is the mirror of all perfections, and that which we ought to contemplate. It is the school in which we must hear the teachings of our divine Master. It is there that we ought to study his divine maxims, where we ought to learn humility, honesty, sweetness, patience, contempt of the world, and, above all, love of Jesus Christ.

Such are the sentiments which ought to animate us in presenting ourselves to the immaculate heart of Mary. That heart, the humblest of all, the most conformable to the divine will, the model of all virtues, will obtain for us the graces of perseverance and salvation. It is the hope of all those who honor it.

Let us acknowledge the infinite clemency of God, who, for the salvation of sinners and the succor of the wretched, has given to the Blessed Virgin Mary a heart like that of Jesus Christ her Son, and has made it a

source of sweetness and of mercy. Let us beg him to grant to all those who honor that treasure of all sanctity, the grace to become, by its merits, men according to the heart of Jesus Christ.

If you have a firm and entire confidence in the sacred heart of Mary, doubt not that you shall soon see the fruits of your devotion and your homage. That holy practice will be to you, during your life, a source of grace and benediction ; and, at death, you will find it an inexhaustible source of consolation and delight.

EXAMPLE.

Establishments of Piety created and maintained by the Protection of Mary.

We may well attribute to the Blessed Virgin the establishment of the Refuge, by the care she constantly took of her who was its foundress. The venerable Mother Mary Elizabeth de Ranfain, whose love for crosses enabled her to surmount the cross, experienced, from her youth, a succession of crosses which might justly be deemed incredible, if they had not had the most authentic publicity. She suffered from her parents, from her husband, from her very domestics, the most unworthy treatment; and that was only the beginning of it. God permitted her to be subjected to the darkest assaults of hell, to the most frightful temptations, the most atrocious calumnies, and unheard-of persecutions. Twenty attempts were made to poison her, to murder her, to violate her; and from the abyss of so many dangers, she escaped only by the protection of the Blessed Virgin. It was always to Mary that she had recourse, and Mary always enabled her to triumph. She procured for her at

length an entire deliverance. Touched with gratitude, she resolved to gain to the divine Mother, for the sake of her Son, as many souls as she possibly could. She labored, accordingly, to withdraw from danger those of her own sex who were most exposed to it; and, undeterred by the trials and difficulties inseparable from such an enterprise, she gradually got together as many as twenty in her own house. The grace that God bestowed upon that little association, commenced under the auspices of Mary, determined the bishop of Toul, who was of the house of Lorraine, to erect it into a religious community. It is that asylum, so usefully opened to penitent souls, that is now known at Nancy under the name of Our Lady of Refuge; because it was Mary who preserved and supported the foundress by her protection, and has always sustained that pious establishment by special proofs of her bounty. (*Life of M. Boudon.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Gertrude.)

Offer to the Blessed Virgin the heart of her divine Son; it was the practice of Saint Gertrude. She offered the heart of Jesus to Mary for the faults she committed in her service.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By the Reverend Father Gallifet.)

O Heart of Mary, thou art the throne of charity, of mercy, and of peace! I venture to offer thee my heart, defiled by a thousand unruly passions! All unworthy as it is of thee, I hope that thou wilt not despise it.

Purify it, sanctify it, detach it from creatures. Penetrate it with sorrow for its sins; fill it with thy love, and the love of Jesus Christ. Finally, render it like thine own; so that it may be able to be united to thee in heaven, and to love God eternally with thee. Amen.

SIXTY-FOURTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY SCAPULAR—16TH JULY.

INSTRUCTION: ON THE ORIGIN, DUTIES, AND ADVANTAGES OF
THE DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SCAPULAR.

“He honored the vesture of holiness.”—*Ecclus.*, chap. 1.

THE devotion of our Lady of Mount Carmel, commonly called of the Holy Scapular, is too celebrated and too well authorized in the Church, not to relate its history here. It has been approved by a great number of sovereign Pontiffs, confirmed by an infinity of miracles, established with incalculable fruits in almost every part of the Christian world, and practised by the faithful with immense advantages of every kind.

Many centuries ago the Carmelite Fathers flourished in the Church, especially in the East, where, in spite of the fury of the barbarians, the Saracens and the Mussulmans, they maintained themselves in the caverns of Mount Carmel; whence their name of Carmelites. France deserved to see established in her bosom an order so celebrated for its devotion to the Blessed Virgin: towards the middle of the thirteenth century, the king, Saint

Louis, gave them at first the hermitage of l'Aigallades, situated about a league from Marseilles; some of them subsequently went to England, where heaven had prepared for them a marvellous subject, whose extraordinary merit and sanctity were soon to glorify the entire order.

It was St. Simon, surnamed "Stock"—an English word signifying the trunk of a tree, in which the Sain had long his abode. He was the sixth Latin general of the order of Carmelites, which had been for many years cruelly tormented by the barbarians, and persecuted in every way. That fervent general, penetrated with the most lively sorrow, and justly alarmed at sight of the peril that threatened his order, but animated by the firmest confidence in Mary, to whom he was eminently devoted, daily opened his heart to her, asking her for a sign of her love and her protection.

He was in the greatest fervor of prayer, when that Queen of heaven appeared to him, accompanied by blessed spirits, and giving him a scapular, "Receive," said she, "my beloved son, this habit of your order, the mark of my confraternity, a privilege for you and for all your children. Whosoever dies in this habit shall not suffer eternal torment: it is a sign of salvation, salvation even in danger, and a treaty of peace and alliance which shall last till the end of ages."

So consoling a revelation, made to so holy a man, was no sooner made public, than kings and peoples hastened with all possible eagerness to be invested in that holy habit. The miracles by which God testified the pleasure that devotion gave to him, increased that pious ardor; so that it may be said that of all the practices of piety with which the faithful have been inspired to honor the Mother of God, there is, perhaps, none so conspicuous as

that of the Scapular, since there are none that seem to have been confirmed by so many authentic miracles.

The Blessed Virgin, well knowing that the most precious practices are only estimable in so far as they are authorized by the Holy See, made known herself to Pope John XXII. the signal privileges of this devotion, as he himself says in his bull *Sacratissimo Culmine*, of 1316. Popes Alexander V., Clement VII., Paul III., Paul IV., Pius V., and Gregory XIII. make mention of it in those they subsequently issued; so that seven great Popes have endeavored to rekindle this devotion more and more in the hearts of the faithful, by an almost infinite number of indulgences granted at various times to those who enter into that pious society. What more consoling pledge of the protection of Mary! What subject of confidence better founded!

It was one of the greatest of Mary's servants who asked and obtained a special mark of the protection of the Mother of God! Heaven authorized it by the mouth of the Vicars of Jesus Christ, and by splendid miracles! No Catholic doubts its efficacy. What more can be required to inspire the most profound respect for that august devotion, and to urge all to embrace it, if they have not as yet had that happiness, with the resolution of afterwards acquitting themselves with fervor of all the duties which it imposes?

The first of those duties is, to be penetrated with a lively feeling of gratitude for the favor which the Blessed Virgin has bestowed upon us, in making us members of a family of which she is the mother.

The second is, to have an infinite esteem for the happiness we enjoy in having been a second time adopted by that divine Mother, in the person of St. Simon Stock.

The third is, to receive the scapular with profound respect, and to wear it night and day without any sort of change, whether in material, form, or color.

The fourth is, to have our name inscribed in the book of the confraternity.

The fifth is, to take a new scapular when the first is worn out, without needing a new benediction or reception.

The sixth is, to wear it as a real garment—that is to say, passed over the shoulders in such wise that one of the two ends may fall on the chest, and the other on the back. It is useless to carry it in the pocket or to have it beside the bed: the scapular is, as it were, a buckler which protects only what it covers.

The seventh is, to wear it till death, because it is especially in the last moments of our life that we need the assistance which the Blessed Virgin grants on account of that holy habit.

The eighth is, to recite every day seven *Paters* and seven *Aves*, in commemoration of the seven joys of Mary in heaven.

Finally, we should render ourselves worthy of the glorious name of children and brethren of the most holy Virgin by imitating her virtues, each in the state in which it has pleased Providence to place us; it is by this means especially that we shall obtain the effects of her bounty and her mercy.

These duties are nothing in comparison with the immense advantages to be derived from their fulfilment. The principal are the special and particular adoption of the most holy Virgin. That adoption was clearly expressed by Mary, when she said to Saint Simon Stock: "Receive, my very dear son, this habit of your order, the mark of

my confraternity." How glorious is that title! how consoling it is! and how well it distinguishes all those who have the happiness of being decorated with it!

The second advantage is, the marked patronage of Mary in favor of the confraternities of the Scapular; a protection which she specially promises, in telling them that "the habit she gives them is a privilege." In what would that privilege consist, if not in the assurance of her mercy and bounty? Finally, the Scapular gives the right of participating in all the spiritual benefits of the order of the Carmelites; and, therefore, of how many prayers, how many offices, how many masses, how many good works for heaven!

But great as are the advantages already mentioned, Mary further promises her dear children of the confraternities, that "the habit with which she clothes them is a garment of salvation—salvation itself; and, that whoever dies in it, shall not suffer eternal fires."

Can there be more magnificent promises? If Mary had permitted us to ask some favors of her, would we ever have dared to ask any like this? Such numerous protections during life, and special assistance at the hour of death! O signal favor, which makes us hope to enjoy the happiness of the Saints on going forth from this vale of tears!

Many Fathers of the Church affirm, that no one devoted to Mary has ever perished; whosoever is truly attached to the service of that Mother of the Saviour, shall never be excluded from the heritage of salvation.

Redouble, then, your zeal and fidelity, happy members of the Confraternity! Honor Mary, imitate Mary! At that price you are sure of being protected by her in time, and of never falling into the fiery gulf of a wretched eternity

EXAMPLE.

Spiritual and corporal favors obtained by the images of the Holy Scapular.

What a host of prodigies present themselves to my gaze! Not miracles attested only by one or two persons, whose testimony might be held in doubt, but by an infinity of witnesses; by whole nations, who cannot be suspected of having acted in concert to impose on the whole world.

Here we behold all Provence ravaged by a terrible pestilence. Marseilles, alone, puts its trust in the Scapular; and that city is saved. Then it consecrates the memory of that signal favor by a monument worthy the greatness of Mary and the piety of its inhabitants.

In Spain, the heavens were closed up, as in the days of Elias; and there was a dearth, as in the days of Joseph. Mary is appealed to, her habit is carried in procession. The sky, before of brass, melts into water, and the people find granaries more abundant than those of Egypt.

At the siege of the island of Malta, in 1565, and at that of the city of Gueldres, in 1597, nations were seen armed against nations; breathing naught but blood and carnage. Mary is invoked, the Scapular is borne in procession. At sight of that new standard the people are disarmed, the torch of war is extinguished, and the charms of peace appear once more.

All nature, all the elements, seem to respect the virtue of that holy habit. Maladies before unknown, defying the skill of the physicians, depopulate the cities and towns of the province of Anjou. The Scapular appears, the mortality ceases.

The powers of the air have formed a frightful tempest, which threatens to devastate, far and wide, the plains of Savoy and Sardinia. By virtue of that celestial habit, the unchained winds, the hail, the lightning, and the thunder are instantly dispelled.

The sea dares to cross the boundaries which the finger of God marked out for it. The Scapular is the dyke opposed to it. The pride of the waves is instantly broken, and they retire within their usual limits.

But if from the miracles operated by the virtue of the holy Scapular, in favor of cities, provinces, and entire kingdoms, we pass to the marvels wrought in favor of individuals, it would require all the tongues that Saint Jerome wished to possess that he might celebrate the virtues of Mary. In truth, the earth is but one vast stage, upon which heaven seems to delight in manifesting the virtue of this habit of the Mother of God. Wherever we turn our eyes, we behold miracles on miracles. How many conflagrations extinguished! how many shipwrecks avoided! how many bullets flattened! how many swords blunted! how many blind restored to sight! how many cripples, how many paralytics cured! how many dead brought back to life!

Who could give an adequate account of the triumphs of the Scapular, over the prince of darkness! How often, at the sight of that holy garment, has that enemy of mankind been forced to abandon those unhappy souls who were the sport of his jealousy, the victims of his fury! How many compacts made by the force of magic, and annulled by the virtue of that celestial habit!

Has not that same power a hundred times crossed the seas, to follow into barbarous regions captives, members of the Confraternity, groaning beneath the tyranny of

the enemy of the Christian name? Has it not gone down with them to the grave, to console them? Has it not delivered many from their chains, to restore them to their own beloved land? How many others has it not confirmed in the faith, at the very moment when, overwhelmed by the weight of their chains, and despairing of breaking them, they were cowardly enough to hesitate between Christ and Mahomet!

How often has oppressed innocence owed its safety to that miraculous habit! How often, by virtue of that same habit, has the condemned criminal seen the instruments of his punishment become the instruments of his conversion, and the scapular become the source of his deliverance and the beginning of his sanctification! How often has the traveller, attacked, and with no defence but the livery of Mary, escaped from the danger of yielding to robbers both his fortune and his life!

How many wonders does the scapular still work before our own eyes! Is there any kind of infirmity of which it has not been the remedy? any species of poison of which it has not been the antidote? Are there any pains which it has not alleviated? wounds which it has not healed? Has it not ever been proof against the murderous tooth of ferocious beasts, the subtle venom of serpents, the voracity of sea and land monsters? How often has it been found in the midst of flames without being injured, in the midst of rottenness without being corrupted, and in the midst of water without being damaged! How often has it not triumphed over the fury of heretics! How often has it not been for the faithful who wear it a source of graces as precious as abundant! (*Father Chaix, on the excellence of the Scapular.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

Observed by the most illustrious men since its introduction.

From the days of the blessed Simon Stock, to whom the most holy Virgin gave the precious habit of the scapular, even to the present time, there is not a single Christian, of whatever rank or condition he may have been, who, having known the spiritual and temporal advantages to be derived from the devotion of the Holy Scapular, has not made it a duty to put it in practice, and wear its sacred livery. Amongst the sovereign Pontiffs who have been devout to the scapular, we shall cite here only Clement VIII., of whom it is recorded, that after his exaltation to the sovereign pontificate, the officer who stripped him of his cardinal's robes was about to remove his scapular, representing to him that the papal costume eminently combines the virtue of all other habits; but that pious pontiff prevented him, saying, "Leave me Mary, lest Mary should leave me."

Amongst the most illustrious cardinals who have worn the scapular with honor, may be mentioned the Barberini, the Albani, the Adalbrandini, the Borghesi, the Bourbons, the Carafi, the Chisi, the Colonna, the Conti, the Corsini, the Gondagni, the Odescalchi, the Jansons, the Medici, the Polignacs, the Sporzi, &c.

If from cardinals we pass to the patriarchs, the archbishops, and bishops, who have worn the scapular, we shall find no Catholic diocese which has not seen many of its prelates clothed with the habit of Mary. The most illustrious are a Saint Lawrence Justinian, a St. Charles Borromeo, a Fléchier, bishop of Nesmes, a Belsunce, Bishop of Marseilles.

It is useless to speak of the emperors, kings, princes,

and princesses, who have worn the scapular. There is not a throne in Europe, some of the sovereigns of which have not been fervent members of that holy association. Here is, undoubtedly, enough to confound the pride of those Christians who blush to enrol themselves in it, and who thereby deprive themselves of an infinity of graces with which Mary enriches her cherished children, both in this world and the other.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Father Chaix, Carmelite of the Old Rule.)

Holy Virgin, Queen of angels and of men, thou who, being the Mother of my God, wouldst also become mine, by admitting me into the number of thy most cherished children, permit me not ever to degenerate from a title so glorious to me. In giving me thy livery, thou hast given me the most precious pledge of thy love. Grant that, by wearing it worthily, I may give thee the surest mark of my gratitude. Thou hast made me the most magnificent promises, as though my own interest did not sufficiently urge me to it. I know all the value of thy bounties; oh, that I might likewise know and fulfil the full extent of my obligations! But as a child is entitled to ask all from a mother so good and so powerful as thou, I entreat thee to interest thyself for me with thy Son, so that, supported by thy credit, and strengthened by his grace, I may answer the purpose he had in creating me, and that which thou hadst in adopting me. Thou, like him, wouldst have it for my sanctification. Kindle, then, in my heart that sacred fire which makes saints, to the end that I may burn with love for Him, as I would burn with zeal for thee. Amen.

SIXTY-FIFTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY ROSARY, FIXED
FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF OCTOBER.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE ORIGIN, DUTIES, AND ADVANTAGES OF THE
DEVOTION OF THE HOLY ROSARY.

“And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayer.”—*Zach.*, chap. xii.

THAT prophecy was only fulfilled in the establishment of the Church. The Synagogue had, it is true, some particles of that spirit of grace and prayer; but its true plenitude was reserved for the Church which Jesus Christ acquired for himself by his blood. When the Holy Ghost descended upon the assembled apostles and disciples, he communicated to them all gifts and all graces; and so abundantly, that each of the faithful was then a prodigy of divine munificence. But, alas ! these dispositions grew gradually weaker and weaker, the spirit of prayer became rare, and that rarity brought rarity of grace. Hence all the disorders which inundate the surface of the earth; all flesh corrupted its ways; and if the Son of God descended again from heaven, he would scarcely have found here below any remains of faith. The fire of prayer was then, it seemed, almost extinct. It was necessary that God should raise up a Dominick, like another Nehemiah, to draw forth that spirit from the well in which it was sunk; and that is what that great saint did in instituting the Rosary. Then was seen accomplished the prophecy of Zacharias:

"I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayer." From that moment, the spirit of fervor was renewed in the Church, and all the sources of grace reopened. Such was the signal service that St. Dominick rendered to religion by establishing the Rosary, which originated as follows:

One day when that great Saint was in the fervor of prayer in the chapel of Our Lady of La Pouille, that Mother of mercy appeared to him and said: "The Angelical Salutation having been, so to say, the beginning of the redemption of mankind, that salutation must also be the beginning of the conversion of the heretics and of victory over the infidels; so that in preaching the Rosary, which contains one hundred and fifty *Aves*, as the Psalter contains one hundred and fifty psalms, he should see a marvellous success crown his labors, and a succession of victories over heresy."

Saint Dominick obeyed that voice, and instead of confining himself, as he had previously done, to disputes and controversies which usually produce but little fruit, he wholly devoted himself to preaching the greatness and the excellence of the Mother of God, and explaining to the people the merit, the advantages, and the practice of the Rosary. The utility of that admirable devotion was speedily recognized: more than a hundred thousand heretics converted, and a prodigious number of noted sinners withdrawn from the habits of sin, clearly proved how powerful with God is that holy prayer. That was, properly speaking, the first epoch of that marvellous devotion, and of the establishment of that holy confraternity, so celebrated throughout the universe, which sovereign Pontiffs have ratified by so many singular privileges,

and which has become a mark of predestination for its members.

In truth, what devotion more agreeable to God? what prayer more efficacious with the Blessed Virgin? The Lord's Prayer, so often repeated in it, was taught us by Jesus Christ; the Angelical Salutation, repeated a hundred and fifty times, is composed of the very words of the angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth; and the prayer which follows is the prayer of the Church. The Rosary contains fifteen decades of Hail Marys; the five first are in memory of the joyful mysteries in which the Blessed Virgin had so much share; the five following, in memory of the five sorrowful mysteries; and the last, in memory of the five glorious mysteries. The joyful mysteries are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Purification, and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple, by his holy Mother, disputing amongst the doctors. The five sorrowful mysteries are: the Agony of our Lord in the Garden of Olives, his Scourging, his Crowning with Thorns, his Carrying of the Cross to Calvary, and his Crucifixion. The glorious mysteries are: the Resurrection of the Saviour, when he appeared first to his Mother, his Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of Mary, body and soul, into heaven, and her Coronation in glory. It is in meditating upon these mysteries that the Rosary becomes one of the holiest prayers of the Church, in which the heart, in accordance with our words, offers to God a perfectly religious worship, and to the Mother of the Saviour that just tribute of praise which gains her acceptance, and makes her pour forth upon her faithful servants that abundance of benediction and those treasures of grace of which she is the distributor.

This repetition of the same prayer was familiar to all the Saints of the New Testament, as well as of the Old: nothing is more common in the Psalms than repetitions; the 135th Canticle or Psalm is almost a repetition of the preceding psalm with this chorus, "for his mercy endureth forever," which recurs at the end of each verse. It was, perhaps, the people who repeated that versicle or chorus after the Levites had pronounced the first part of the verse, pretty much as we do in reciting the Litanies. Jesus Christ himself, as we learn from the Gospel, repeated several times the selfsame prayer which he addressed to his Father in the Garden of Olives. It is said of Saint Bartholomew that he prayed a hundred times in the day. Palladius and Sozomen relate that Paul, an abbot who lived in the time of Saint Anthony, repeated the same prayer three hundred times a day, and that he reckoned them by means of small pebbles which he drew one by one from his bosom. It is affirmed that Peter the Hermit, desirous of disposing the nations for the holy war in 1096, exhorted them to recite every day a certain number of Our Fathers and a hundred and fifty Hail Marys for the success of so important an enterprise, assuring them that he had learned that practice from the holiest solitaries of Palestine, amongst whom it had long been in use. Pope Leo IV. directed that all the soldiers engaged in driving the Saracens from the gates of Rome should have a chaplet of fifty *Aves*, and it was to that prayer that he attributed the signal victory which the troops of the Church gained over those infidels. We read, also, in Surius, that Saint Albert, a monk of Crepin, made every day a hundred and fifty genuflections, reciting at each the Angelical Salutation. When the body of St. Gertrude was discovered, who had died in

667, there were found in her tomb some strung beads, the remains of the chaplet which that Saint had ordered to be buried with her. All these things make it very clear how ancient is the use of the chaplet; but it is to Saint Dominick that we owe the pious practice of honoring the Mother of God by the Rosary; and it is to the signal piety and zeal of his order towards the Blessed Virgin that that important devotion owes its marvellous progress.

Of all the different kinds of homage which the Church pays to the Mother of God, it may be said that the devotion of the Rosary is one of those that honors her the most. Nothing was more glorious to the Blessed Virgin than the deputation of the angel Gabriel to announce to her that she should be Mother of God: as often as we recite that salutation, just so often do we in some sort do the errand and discharge the office of the angel himself, reminding her of the honor she received by that choice. There is no prayer, then, more agreeable to her.

"Prayer and meditation," says Saint Bernard, "are closely united together; prayer is, as it were, the torch from which meditation receives light and heat: that is what is found in the Rosary, and that was also what caused the blessed Alain de la Roche to say that "the Rosary is, so to say, the queen of all prayers, for the reason that the Rosary is the finest of all practices of devotion."

The heretics of all ages, enemies of the Mother of the Son, have many times exclaimed against that holy devotion; those of later times especially have been furious against the Rosary. That pious practice was too fatal to the Albigenses not to excite their hatred and the imprecations of their descendants; they left no means un-

tried to raise a prejudice against it, but all their efforts only served to increase the number of the members of the confraternity.

No society of the servants of Mary is more celebrated than this; none is more advantageous to Christians; none is better authorized by the Church. With what profusion have not twelve or thirteen sovereign Pontiffs poured forth on those pious confraternities the spiritual treasures of which they are the sacred depositories! With what eagerness have not kings and peoples entered that holy society! What victories it has gained over the enemies of the faith! What reformations it has effected in morals! What edifying piety that solid devotion has caused to be propagated throughout the world! Even in the lifetime of its holy institutor, it was seen established with marvellous fruits in France, in Spain, in Germany, in Portugal, in Italy, in Russia, and the islands of the Archipelago.

It was Pope Pius V., who, having instituted, in 1572, on the occasion of a victory over the Turks by the Christians, the feast of Our Lady of Victory, also instituted the solemnity of the Rosary.

Pope Gregory XIII. gave permission to the confraternity to celebrate this feast on the first Sunday of October; another victory obtained over the Turks by the all-powerful protection of the Mother of the God of armies, induced Pope Clement XI. to make it a universal feast throughout the Church.

The obligations which the Rosary imposes are very slight, and each one may easily acquit themselves of them. It requires neither fasting nor abstinence; it binds neither to alms, nor vows, nor pilgrimages; it is not even necessary to know how to read and write, for

it suffices to be able to recite the Our Father and the Hail Mary to have the happiness of performing an action most agreeable to the Blessed Virgin. Now, is there any Christian who does not know these two prayers? The mental prayer in saying the Rosary well is scarcely more difficult than the vocal; it is only requisite to meditate upon the mysteries which the Church proposes to our faith in the various feasts which she celebrates.

Neither is it requisite to be free from occupations, nor at a particular time, nor certain hours of the day; for the Rosary or Chaplet may be recited at all times and in all places, by day or by night, in-doors or out, kneeling or standing, sitting or lying, walking or travelling, even while engaged at manual labor; in short, each one according to their own convenience, and in the way that best suits themselves: provided the prayer be accompanied by sentiments of interior piety and by exterior recollection, it is sure to please the Blessed Virgin, and to obtain from her the most signal graces and favors.

There is no devotion more universally spread than that of the Rosary: it is also the most convenient, as it is one of the most useful; it contains in its bosom persons of both sexes, of all ranks, of all ages and conditions. Some examples will prove how much the devotion of the Rosary has been venerated by the most august personages, who have practised it with as much profit to themselves as edification to the Church.

Pope Clement IX., after having recited the Rosary with equal piety and zeal during his life, wished at his death to receive the benediction and general absolution usually given to the dying members of the confraternity. Queen Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII., king of France, particularly signalized herself by the devotion of the Ro-

sary. She regularly assisted at the processions held on the first Sunday of every month, and had her son, Louis XIV., received into that pious association; and he, wishing to render that devotion, as it were, hereditary in his royal family, ordered that his son, the Dauphin, and afterwards his grandson, the Duke of Burgundy, should be enrolled as members of the confraternity. He himself had all his life a great devotion for the rosary, and often said that he should be sorry to pass a single day without reciting the whole of it. Saint Charles Borromeo and Saint Francis de Sales engaged themselves by a vow to recite the Rosary every day, notwithstanding their numerous occupations.

The Rosary is known throughout the earth; for there is neither town nor village, no matter how large or how small, in which that excellent devotion is not in use. No better proof need be required of the zeal of a good pastor for the sanctification of souls, than that of his assiduity in promoting the practice of the Holy Rosary in his parish. It is by that that France and Spain have been sanctified. Alain de la Roche relates the following anecdote, which proves the great utility of the practice of the Rosary: "A priest, named Christian, in the kingdom of Dacia, explained himself thus: 'I have exercised, for many years, the office of pastor and preacher. I have preached in all sorts of ways, from the plainest and most instructive to the most rhetorical and imposing. I have endeavored to omit nothing that could instruct, edify, and convert; but I discovered that I labored in vain. Then I determined that I would no longer bring to the pulpit carefully studied discourses. I resolved to try whether I could not obtain more fruit by simply preaching the devotion of the Rosary, which I had till

then neglected, notwithstanding the inspirations which God had given me. Fearing that such oratorical simplicity would draw on me the ridicule of most of my hearers, who regard that subject as too low, too popular, and quite unworthy of the pulpit, I began again, then, to demonstrate the excellence and the advantages of the Rosary. I persisted in that course for a whole year, and I protest I made more conversions, and derived more advantages from it, than I had ever obtained in thirty years' preaching.' ”

Let us wish that all pastors, priests, and confessors, may employ such a means of making religion flourish, and of closing thus all the wounds which impiety is so long opening.

EXAMPLE.

Spiritual and temporal favors obtained by means of the Rosary.

It would be an endless task to relate all the species of favors obtained by the Rosary—the conversion of sinners, the return to virtue, an eminent holiness, are the principal and ordinary fruits obtained by the faithful observance of that holy practice, the efficacy of which extends to the remedy of bodily ills, and also to the procuring of temporal goods. The Ark of the Covenant brought not more benedictions into the house of Obededom, than the Rosary would bring into those of Christians, if they habitually make the pious and worthy use of it. Union, peace, piety, and sanctity, would reign in families. Husbands would be seen pious, moderate, reserved, retired from the world, faithful to all their duties; wives, prudent, modest, and virtuous; children, wise and obedient; servants, industrious, honest, and

faithful. In short, there would be everywhere tasted, the anticipated sweets of heaven, of which families devoted to the Rosary would be a true image. The recitation of the holy Rosary, then, obtains for all those who are faithful to it spiritual and even temporal benefits. The objects which are consecrated to it, such as chaplets, rosaries, crowns, images, blessed tapers, procure extraordinary graces for those who wear them, or make other appropriate use of them. Those precious objects have often restored health to the sick, and wrought marvellous things.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Dominick, and all true servants of Mary.)

Acquire the religious habit of having a rosary always about you. It is the armor of the valiant, which renders them invincible against the attacks of their enemies, visible or invisible. It has been observed that fatal accidents never occurred to those who, with sentiments of faith and piety, were provided with a holy Rosary.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By the Blessed Alain de la Roch.)

Holy Virgin, whose greatness, after that of God, is incomprehensible, the holiest amongst the Saints, powerful dispenser of grace, through whom our sins are forgiven us, Mother of salvation and of all good! who would be insensate enough not to love thee, not to honor thee? Who would be so base and so indifferent as not to invoke thee—thou, who art our light, our help, our consolation, our refuge, and, after thy Son, all our hope,

all our salvation! Blessed are they who love thee, who honor thee, and devoutly serve thee by the Rosary! I commend to thy goodness my soul and my body; instruct me, protect me at all hours and at all moments, and never abandon me thou who art my defence and my life. Amen.

SIXTY-SIXTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—8TH OF DECEMBER.

INSTRUCTION: IT CONCERNED THE THREE DIVINE PERSONS THAT
MARY SHOULD BE CONCEIVED WITHOUT ORIGINAL SIN.

“Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.”—*Cant.*
chap. iv.

THE Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin having been established by the universal Church, which celebrates the instant when the soul of Mary was created and united to her body, it is useless to dwell upon proofs of the truth of that beautiful privilege of the Mother of God. Pope Alexander VII., in his bull published in 1661, declares, that “the Church pays to the Conception of Mary the same worship that is allotted to her by the pious opinion that she was conceived without the stain of original sin.”

“It behooved,” says Saint Alphonso Liguori, whose works have been approved by the Roman Church, “it behooved each of the three divine persons to preserve

Mary from original sin; the Father considering her as his daughter, the Son as his mother, and the Holy Ghost as his spouse."

Let us develop the motives of this threefold agreement, for the glory of Mary and for our own consolation. It became God the Father to exempt Mary from original sin, because she was his daughter, and his eldest daughter, as she herself attests, "I was the first-born of every creature." (*Ecclus.*, xxiv.) That passage has been applied to Mary by the interpreters, by the holy Fathers, and by the Church herself, in the Feast of her Immaculate Conception; for, whether she be recognized as the eldest daughter because she was predestined at the same time as her Son, in the decrees of God, before the creation of the world, according to the opinion of the Scotists, or whether she be recognized as the eldest daughter of grace, as predestinated to be the Mother of the Redeemer after the foresight of sin, as the Thomists maintain, all, however, agree in calling her the eldest daughter of God. Accordingly, it was very necessary that Mary should never have been the slave of the devil, and that she should always have been in the possession of her Creator, as she again assures us when she says, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways. (*Prov.*, chap. viii.) It is, therefore, with reason that Denis, archbishop of Alexandria, calls Mary the one only daughter of life, to distinguish her from others who, being born in sin, are daughters of death. It was fitting that the eternal Father should create her in a state of grace, since he destined her to be the pacificator, the repairer of mankind, mediatrix between God and man. It was fitting that God should preserve Mary from the original stain, since he destined her to crush the head of the serpent.

Now, if Mary was to be the strong woman in the world to vanquish Lucifer, it was not expedient that she should have been first vanquished by her enemy, nor subjected to his power. Thanks to the divine goodness, Mary received the signal favor of being exempt from all taint of sin, and by that means she could humble and confound the pride of her enemy.

"But it especially behooved the eternal Father to exempt Mary from original sin, because he destined her to be the Mother of his divine Son," says Saint Bernardine of Sienna. Even had God no other motive than the honor of his Son, that motive was sufficient to make him create Mary pure and spotless.

The first advantage for children is to be born of noble parents; "The glory of children are their fathers." (*Prov.*, chap. xvii.) People in the world can better endure the privation of science and wealth than that of distinguished birth; for if one is poor, he may become rich by industry, and one who is ignorant may become learned by study: but one who is ignobly born can with difficulty acquire a title of nobility; and even supposing they do obtain it, they shall be none the less exposed to being reproached with the meanness of their origin. So it was fitting that God should cause his Son to be born of a noble Mother, by preserving her from sin. He could not have him born of a mother infected with sin, thus enabling Lucifer always to reproach our Saviour with the disgrace of being born of a mother who was once his slave, and the enemy of God. Certainly not; and God amply provided for the glory of his Son, in decreeing that Mary should be ever immaculate. "By a special decree," says the Liturgy of the Greek Church, on the 25th day of March, "by a special decree of Divine Providence, the Blessed Virgin,

from the beginning of her existence, had all the purity that became her who was to be the worthy Mother of Jesus Christ." The Latin Church declares, in her prayers, that "God prepared the body and the soul of Mary to be an abode worthy of his divine Son on earth."

It is an axiom amongst theologians, that no gift was ever granted to a creature with which the holy Virgin was not likewise enriched. "That being premised," says Saint Anselm, the great defender of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, "would it be impossible for the divine Wisdom to prepare for his Son a pure abode, free from the stain common to mankind?" "God was able to preserve pure," continues the same Saint, "the faithful angels in heaven, when so great a number of them might have been lost, and could he not preserve from the common fall the Mother of his Son and the Queen of angels." (*Serm. de Concep.*) Could God have granted Eve to come pure into the world, and could he not so far favor Mary?

Yes, he could do so, and he really did, since it was fitting that the Virgin to whom God resolved to give his only Son should be endowed with a purity surpassing not only that of all men and of all angels, but greater than could be imagined, after his own, in order that he might be able to say to that beloved daughter, "thou art amongst my other daughters like the lily among thorns, since they are all spotted with sin, but thou wert always immaculate, always in my grace."

Moreover, God being pure and perfect, it was fitting, also, that he should have a mother pure, perfect, and spotless; "and that was precisely what happened," says Saint Bernardine of Sienna. This doctrine is supported by that of Saint Paul, who says: "It was fitting that

our Redeemer should be separated not only from sin, but also from sinners;" and how could Jesus Christ be truly said to be separated from sinners if he had had a sinful mother?

The Holy Ghost says that "the glory of a man is from the honor of his father; and a father without honor is the disgrace of the son." (*Ecc.*, chap. iii.) For that reason it was that Jesus Christ preserved from corruption the body of Mary after her death, "because it would not have been honorable to him to leave to corruption that virginal flesh wherewith he had clothed himself," as Saint Augustine says. Now, if it would have been an opprobrium for the Redeemer to be born of a mother whose body would have been subject to corruption, it must have been a much greater disgrace to be born of a mother whose soul should have been infected by the corruption of sin. Moreover, the flesh of Jesus Christ is the same as that of Mary (continues Saint Augustine); so that the flesh of the Saviour after his resurrection remained the same as that which he had taken in the womb of Mary. "Finally," he concludes, "if that glorious privilege did not befit the Blessed Virgin herself, it befits the Son whom she brought into the world." (*Hom. de Ass.*, 37.)

Saint Augustine, speaking of sin, will not "that Mary be called in question, through respect," he says, "for the God whom she merited to have for her Son, and who gave her the grace of being preserved from all sin."

It was no shame to Jesus Christ to hear himself scornfully spoken of as the son of Mary, as the son of a poor woman, since he came upon earth to give examples of humility and patience; but it would have been a disgrace to him to hear it said of him by the devil—"Was he

not born of a sinful woman, who was formerly our slave?"

The Son of God came into the world to redeem mankind. There are two ways of redeeming, according to Saint Augustine: the one by raising up what is already fallen; the other, by preventing the fall. "This last way is doubtless the noblest," adds Saint Augustine, "because thus the damage or stain which the soul receives from the fall is avoided." "Consequently," says Saint Bonaventure, "it was in that nobler manner, and more befitting the Mother of God, that we are bound to believe that Mary was redeemed." Cardinal Hugo adds on this subject: "The Redeemer delivers all the rest of mankind from sin already contracted, but he delivered his Mother from the ignominy of contracting sin."

"Nurse, O Mary," exclaims Saint Ildefonso, "nurse thy Creator! nurse Him who gave thee being, and who gave it to thee in so eminent a degree of purity and perfection, that he rendered thee worthy to communicate human existence to himself."

Finally, since it behoved the Father to preserve Mary from the stain of original sin as his daughter, and the Son to preserve her as his Mother, it also concerned the Holy Ghost to preserve her as his spouse.

If an excellent painter were to marry a beautiful woman, such as he himself should paint her, what pains would he not take to give her all the beauty he could! How are we to believe that the Holy Ghost acted otherwise with Mary, his spouse? Doubtless, he gave her all possible beauty, as the Lord himself assures us when he says: "Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee." These words, according to Saint Ildefonso and Saint Thomas, properly refer to Mary; Saint Bernardine of Si-

enna and Saint Lawrence Justinian affirm that they allude precisely to her immaculate conception.

This was likewise what the Holy Ghost indicated when he gave to Mary, his spouse, the name of "an inclosed garden," of "a sealed fountain;" in fact, the Blessed Virgin was that inclosed garden and that sealed fountain, since the enemy of mankind never entered into her to defile her; but she was ever beyond the reach of his darts, ever pure and holy in soul as in body.

The divine Spouse loved Mary more than all the Saints and angels together; he loved her from the beginning, and raised her in holiness above all men, says the Royal Prophet, to signify that Mary was holy from the moment of her conception. All just souls are daughters of divine grace, but Mary was the only one conceived in grace.

The angel, even before she was Mother of God, found her already *full of grace*; "in such wise," says Saint Thomas, "that grace sanctified not only the soul, but also the flesh of Mary; so that she might afterwards clothe with it the eternal Word." Thus Mary was, from her conception, enriched and filled with grace by the Holy Ghost.

Let us, then, have the greatest devotion for the Immaculate Conception of Mary; let us honor it, especially, by the greatest possible purity; with that angelic virtue we shall render ourselves acceptable to the Blessed Virgin, who will not fail to reward us.

EXAMPLE.

Happy results of devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

In the year 1629, the emperor of Austria, Ferdinand III., seeing himself threatened by the Swedes, inflated

by their successes and their conquests, had recourse to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. He caused to be erected in the great square of Vienna a magnificent column, adorned with emblems which are so many figures of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. At each of the four corners of the pedestal was seen an angel, armed, and trampling a monster under his feet, symbolical of the victory which Mary obtained over original sin. On the top of the column rose the statue of the Blessed Virgin, crushing with her foot the infernal serpent; below was read this inscription, in Latin: "To God, most good and most great, sovereign emperor of heaven and earth, by whom kings reign: to the Virgin Mother of God, conceived without the stain of original sin, and by whom princes command,—chosen this day, by a special devotion, to be the patroness of Austria,—Ferdinand, third emperor of that name, intrusts, devotes, and consecrates to her all that he possessés, his person, his children, his peoples, his armies, his provinces, and in perpetual memory of that devotion he has erected this statue to her."

Never was seen a more solemn festival than the benediction of that superb monument; it was truly the triumph of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

The religious emperor, accompanied by his son, afterwards Ferdinand IV., king of Bohemia and Hungary, by his daughter, Mary Anne of Austria, queen of Spain, by divers ambassadors, all the nobility, all the religious communities, all the clergy, and followed by a countless multitude, went in solemn procession, and in a loud voice pronounced his vow, edifying the court and the people by his tender piety.

The remainder of the day was spent in religious exer-

cises, and the festival was closed in the evening by a most gorgeous spectacle, furnished by the zeal of the Empress Maria-Eleonora, widow of Ferdinand II. Whilst all the houses in the city were brilliantly illuminated, the great square was magnificently lit up, the column, covered with lighted tapers of white wax, appeared as though all on fire, and the statue of the Blessed Virgin was arched over by a rainbow of lights.

This pious and striking act in honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was so pleasing to God, that only a few days after were seen the effects of the protection of so powerful a patroness; for, the emperor having immediately repaired to Egra, a city adjacent to the enemy, suddenly put a stop to the rapid conquests of the Swedes, which had thrown all Germany into consternation; he compelled them to retire and to conclude a peace glorious to the empire. (*Father Croiset: Christian Year.*)

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Francis Xavier.)

Have a tender devotion for the Immaculate Conception, and invoke the Blessed Virgin under the title of Immaculate, especially in temptations against purity: it was by that practice that the great Saint Francis Xavier wrought so many prodigies in India and Japan, of which he merited to become the apostle, baptizing eleven kings, and converting a million of infidels. It is also by this practice that the servants of Mary are victorious over the demon of impurity.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Anselm.)

Holy Mother, only Mother, Immaculate Mother, Mother

of mercy, Mother of clemency, open to me the bosom of thy piety, and there preserve one who is dead in sin !
Amen.

SIXTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN—8TH SEPTEMBER.

INSTRUCTION : MARY IS FULL OF GRACE FROM HER BIRTH, AND
CORRESPONDS THERETO WITH THE GREATEST FIDELITY.

“Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?”—*Canticle*, chap. vi.

Two strong reasons ought to convince us that Mary was filled with grace from the beginning of her being: first, the dignity of Mother of God, for which she was destined; and next, the office of mediatrix, which she was to fulfil between God and men. Saint Thomas informs us that the Lord gives to every one a grace proportioned to the dignity for which he is intended. Now, since Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of the Word, she must have received graces proportionate to the sublime rank to which she was to be elevated; and as that rank forms a separate order, and is superior to that of all other creatures, it follows that the graces with which Mary was enriched, even from her birth, incomparably surpassed all those which the Saints received during the whole course of their life. Mary herself declares that truth by the mouth of Wisdom, when she says:

"My abode is in the full assembly of the Saints." (*Ecclus.* xxiv.) David said, and his words are applied to Mary, "He shall come down like rain upon the fleece" (*Psalms* lxxi.); which fleece abundantly received the dew of grace without losing a drop. And he elsewhere says: "The foundations of the City of God," which is Mary, "were to be laid upon the mountain tops;" that is to say, that the beginning of the life of the Blessed Virgin was to be loftier in holiness than the last years of Saints the most consummate in virtue. The prophet gives as a reason, that God was to become incarnate in her virginal womb; so it was fitting that God should give to that Virgin, from the moment he created her, a grace corresponding to the dignity of the Mother of God. That is what Isaiah, too, would have us understand, when he says, that "in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord (that is, the Blessed Virgin) shall be preferred on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." (*Isaiah*, ii.) Pope Saint Gregory applies that passage to Mary, who is the mountain that God has chosen for his dwelling-place; and for that reason she is called in the holy books, cypress of the mountain, but of the mountain of Sion; cedar, but cedar of Lebanon; olive-tree, but fair olive-tree; chosen or elect, but elect as the sun. "So," says Saint Bernard, "it was not fitting that God should have any other mother than Mary, and it was not fitting that Mary should have other son than God."

Hence the holy Fathers said that "the soul of Mary, after the Incarnation of the Word, was the greatest and noblest of God's works in this world, its sanctity surpassing that of all the saints and all the angels together; and that in view of her eminent dignity of Mother

of God. In fact, at the very moment when the person of the eternal Word was, in the decrees of God, predestined to become man, the mother that was to give him human existence must also have been designated. So Mary, in that sublime quality, must have been loaded by the Lord with graces, gifts, and spiritual riches; she must have participated in all the celestial treasures.

Let us, then, adore the divine mercy in the choice of a Mother so holy, so august, who to that first title of Mother of God, already so elevated, so incomprehensible, joins that of "mediatrix between God and men:" which proves that the Blessed Virgin, from the first moment of her life, was holier than all the Saints together; for the great office of mediatrix which she was to fill required that she should thenceforth possess more graces than all men together. The Fathers of the Church and the theologians agree in giving to Mary that title of mediatrix; for the reason that, by her powerful intercession and by her merit of congruity, she obtained for all men the signal favor of redemption. Jesus Christ alone is our mediator by way of justice, by "condign merit," as it is called by the schoolmen; he offered his merits to the eternal Father, who accepted them for our salvation. But Mary is mediatrix of grace only by way of simple intercession and the merit of congruity, because she offered to God, say the theologians, with St. Bonaventure, her merits for the salvation of all men; God by his grace accepted therewith the merits of Jesus Christ, so that all the benefits, all the gifts of eternal life that each Saint has received from God, have been granted to them through the means of Mary.

Here is precisely what the Church will have us understand, when she applies to Mary that passage of Eccle-

siasticus: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth; in me is all hope of life and of virtue. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy love." (*Ecclus.* xxiv.) That is to say, that by Mary are all graces dispensed, by the means of Mary are acquired the theological virtues, which are the principal virtues of the Saints. Mary, by her intercession, obtains for her servants the gifts of pure love, fear of God, celestial light, and holy confidence.

Let us conclude that Mary, whether as Mediatrix of men, or as destined to be the Mother of the Redeemer, received a grace greater than that of all the Saints together. Even in her Mother's womb she was, in the sight of God, the loveliest of creatures: as being already filled with merits, she was more filled with love for God than any other creature, who, till then, had ever existed. So that if the Blessed Virgin were born immediately after her Immaculate Conception, she would even then have come into the world richer in merits than all the Saints together. To such great sanctity let us add that which she acquired during the nine months that she remained in her mother's womb, and we may judge what its degree was when she came into the world !

Let us now consider how great was the fidelity with which Mary immediately corresponded to divine grace. It is a generally received opinion, that Mary, in receiving the sanctifying grace in the womb of her mother, received at the same time the use of reason, with a divine light corresponding to the grace with which she was enriched; so from the first moment that that beautiful soul was united to her body, she was illuminated with all the lights of divine wisdom, so as fully to comprehend the eternal truths.

From that first moment, Mary, full of gratitude to her God, began to make available that treasure of grace which she had received. She applied herself wholly to loving and pleasing God. She loved him with all her strength, and never ceased for a moment to unite herself more and more with God by fervent acts of love. Exempt from original sin, she was also free from all earthly attachments, from all irregular motions, from all distraction, from all rebellion of the senses which could have prevented her from advancing more and more in divine love. Therefore it is that she is called in Scripture "a plane-tree raised above the waters," because she was that worthy plant which ever continued growing, watered by the current of divine grace.

Many esteemed theologians say, that the soul which possesses a habit of virtue, if it always corresponds faithfully with the actual graces it receives from God, incessantly produces an act equal in intensity to the habit it has; so that it adds each time a new and double merit equal to the sum of all the merits previously acquired. Mary, more faithful than all the angels in corresponding with it, sees continually increasing that prodigious grace which she received with her being, because, in corresponding perfectly to it, with all her strength, by every act she made she necessarily increased her merits. What treasures of grace, of merit, and of sanctity, did not Mary bring into the world the day of her birth! Let us, then, rejoice with her, that she was born so holy, so dear to God. Let us rejoice, since she came into the world full of grace, not only for her own glory but also for our advantage.

EXAMPLE.

History of the institution of the Order for the Redemption of Captives, in the name of Mary.

The Church, ever zealous to testify her gratitude to Mary for the benefits which that divine protectress ceases not to pour down upon the faithful, loses no opportunity to perpetuate her remembrance, and reanimate our confidence in her.

The Feast of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of Our Lady of Mercy, was instituted in the universal Church in gratitude for Mary's special compassion for poor captives. Mary herself condescended to inspire Saint Peter Nolasco with the project of a religious establishment for their deliverance. She appeared to him in 1218, at the time when he was praying and in tears. A great number of poor Christians were at that time groaning under the tyranny of the infidels. The Blessed Virgin told him that he could do nothing more agreeable to her Son and herself, than to establish a new society under the title of Our Lady of Mercy, the object of which should be to labor for their redemption. That great saint did not hesitate a moment, and, by the zeal and advice of Saint Raymond de Pennafort, and the aid of James, king of Aragon, both of whom had had the same revelation, he instituted, with the approbation of the Holy See, that celebrated order. In consequence, the Church established, in perpetuity, a particular festival on the 24th of September, in memory of so signal a benefit, and in thanksgiving for the institution of an order which is itself a permanent miracle of the most heroic Christian charity.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Peter Damian.)

Recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin as often as you can, but at least do not fail to say it on the days of Mary's festivals. That practice is extremely agreeable to her. Saint Charles Borromeo always said it kneeling, as well as Saint Peter Damian, who composed it in special honor of the Blessed Virgin. Persons who cannot read may, instead of reciting the Office, say the Rosary with the same intention.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Thomas.)

O Mary, thou art blessed above all others of thy sex, because thou art the only one who has banished malediction, drawn down benediction, and opened the gates of heaven! Deign, then, to bestow upon us some portion of the good thou hast procured for all the earth, to the end that we may profit by it, and may by the aid of thy merits gain heaven. Amen.

SIXTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN—NOVEMBER 21.

INSTRUCTION: MARY, PRESENTING HERSELF IN THE TEMPLE,
OFFERS HERSELF ENTIRELY TO GOD.

“Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father’s house.”—*Ps.* xlv.

THERE never was, and never will be, a greater and more perfect offering of a pure creature than that which Mary, at the age of three years, made to God, when she presented herself in the Temple to offer to him, not aromatics, animals, talents of gold, but her whole person as a perfect holocaust, consecrating herself as a perpetual victim to his honor. She heard the voice of God inviting her thenceforward to devote herself wholly to his love. It was the Lord’s will that she should forget her parents, her country, to attach herself only to loving and pleasing him, and she obeyed that voice. From the first moment that she was sanctified in her mother’s womb, and that was the first of her Immaculate Conception, she received the perfect use of reason, that she might begin to merit, as is taught by all the Doctors, with Father Suarez, who says, that “the most perfect manner in which God sanctifies a soul is to sanctify it by its own merits;” so, as Saint Thomas remarks, “we are bound to believe that Mary was thus sanctified.”

Mary, from the very beginning of her existence, knew God so well, that, according to the revelation made to

Saint Bridget, no tongue could express it. Enlightened by the first rays of divine light, she offered herself wholly to her Lord, her master, and devoted herself exclusively to his love and his glory, thus submitting herself to whatever might please the Lord.

But, afterwards learning that her parents had made a vow to God that if he would grant them a child, they would consecrate it to his service in the Temple, Mary determined to present herself there, and to consecrate herself solemnly to the Most High. She was, therefore, the first to beg her parents, as soon as she attained her third year, to take her to Jerusalem to fulfil their promise: they did so with pious alacrity. The holy family arrived at the Temple, and Mary was immediately presented to the holy priest Saint Zachary, renounced the world and all the goods which it promises to its votaries.

At the time of the Deluge, the raven sent forth by Noah from the Ark returned thither no more, but stayed away to prey on dead bodies ; but the dove, finding no rest anywhere for its feet, quickly returned to the Ark. Many people sent by God into this world unhappily fix themselves there, and busy themselves only with terrestrial things; but, very different was the conduct of Mary. That celestial dove knew that God should be our only good, our only hope, and the only object of our love ; she knew that the world was full of dangers, and that the sooner we abandon it, the sooner we are safe from its snares. She would, then, avoid it from her earliest age, and shut herself up in the seclusion of the Temple, that there she might be more attentive to the voice of her God, to honor and love him the more. Thus Mary rendered herself by her very first actions entirely agree-

able to her divine Master; and it is in reference to that promptitude that she is compared to the moon, which completes its course sooner than all the planets. She attained perfection more promptly than all the other Saints, by giving herself unreservedly to God.

Mary knew that God accepts not a divided heart, but will have it consecrated entirely to his love, according to the precept he has given. So, from the first moment of her life, she began to love him with all her strength, and gave herself up entirely to him. But her most holy soul had ardently longed for the time when she should solemnly consecrate herself to him, devoting to him all her faculties, all her senses, her whole mind, her whole heart, her whole soul, and her whole body. It was then, as is believed, that, to please God, she made a vow of virginity, a vow that no one had ever made before her, and she devoted herself to serving God in the Temple, without ever leaving it, if it were pleasing to him. With what holy transports must she not have exclaimed, "My Lord and my God, I have come here only to please thee, and to render thee all the honor I can; here I mean to live and die for thee, if thou wilt deign to permit me. Receive the sacrifice which thy poor handmaid makes to thee, and help her to be ever faithful to thee." In the Temple, Mary spoke little, was docile and self-collected, never laughing or being disturbed. She persevered in prayer, reading, fasting, and in all works of virtue.

Saint Jerome adds: "Mary prayed from morning till the third hour; at the sixth hour she applied herself to some kind of labor, at nine she resumed her prayer until the angel brought her food; she was most exact in fulfilling the divine law, the humblest and most perfect in all sorts of virtues. She was never seen agitated; all

her words were accompanied by so much sweetness that they breathed the spirit of God, by which she was animated. In the middle of the night she went to the foot of the altar in the temple, to pray the Lord to grant her the grace to observe his commandments, to allow her to see in this world the Mother of the promised Redeemer, to preserve her sight that she might contemplate her, her tongue to praise her, her hands and feet to serve her, and her knees that she might kneel down to adore the divine Saviour in her womb."

The Redeemer, for the love of that incomparable Virgin, hastened his coming into the world; Mary, who, in her humility, did not believe herself to be worthy to be the servant of the Mother of God, had been chosen to be herself that Mother. Her virtues and her prayers drew into her virginal womb the Son of the Almighty; hence it was that her divine Spouse gave her the name of dove: like the dove, she always loved solitude, coming to the earth as to a desert; like the dove, that fills the woods with its tender plaint, Mary ceased not to moan in the Temple, compassionating the miseries of the lost world, and begging of God the coming of the Redeemer.

It was pleasing to God to behold the humblest of virgins raising herself incessantly to the highest perfection, like a pillar of perfumes enriched with the odor of all the virtues; and this is expressed by the Holy Ghost in the divine Scriptures. Mary was a garden of delights to the Lord, since he found in her flowers of every sort. God chose her to be his Mother on earth, because there was no virgin to be found more holy, nor place more worthy of being his dwelling than the chaste womb of Mary.

Even as Mary presented and offered herself entirely to God in the Temple, let us present ourselves unreserv-

edly to Mary, and beseech her to offer us to God. He will not reject us, seeing us presented by the hand of her who was the living temple of the Holy Ghost, the delight of God the Father, and the worthy Mother of the eternal Word. Let us hope every thing, then, from a protection so great, which rewards so lovingly the honors we pay her and the devotion that we testify towards her.

EXAMPLE.

Christendom delivered from the arms of the Infidels by the confidence of Pope Pius V. in Mary.

In 1572, the Turk, that irreconcilable enemy of the Christian name, had pushed his fatal conquests so far, that he meditated nothing less than to plant the Crescent on our walls and on our temples. All were in dismay at the report of his threats; the earth seemed to tremble and shrink beneath the weight of his arms; the sea, which obeys only Heaven, the sea covered with vessels, apparently respected his caprices, and seemed to second his views on every occasion. Every thing breathed blood and carnage, everywhere were heard only blasphemies and imprecations against Jesus Christ; terror was in the holy places, and all Christendom regarded itself as already the prey of its enemies. In such a deplorable state, Pius V., who then governed the Church, accustomed to receive favors from Mary, addressed himself to her, and implored her not to allow the spouse of her divine Son to fall into the hands of the infidels. Oh, prodigy of mercy and of secure resource for the unhappy in their divine protectress! scarcely had the pontiff finished his prayer, when word was brought him that the enemy's army was routed, and driven into its last intrenchments; that eighty galleys with their commanders

were captured, and that fifteen hundred Christian slaves had been delivered, with all the advantages of a glorious victory;—certain proofs that it is never in vain that we address ourselves to Mary in our necessities.

It was to perpetuate the memory of an event so honorable to the Mother of God, and so advantageous to the Church of Christ, that Pius V., that great pontiff, from the height of the apostolic chair, made the sacred arches of the Vatican resound with the glorious title of "Help of Christians," which he, for the first time, addressed to Mary, saying to her, in tones of the warmest gratitude, "Help of Christians, pray for us!"

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Charles Borromeo.)

Fast on Saturdays and on the feast days of the Blessed Virgin, or at least deprive yourself of something in honor of the Mother of God. Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint Louis, king of France, and many other great Saints, faithfully observed that pious practice, and derived much fruit therefrom.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Anselm.)

Blessed art thou, O Mary, and thou hast the plenitude of all goods! Thou art truly that admirable Virgin, worthy of all kinds of honors! Thou art truly that woman, blessed above all other women; for thou hast repaired the loss of our first parents, and vivified their posterity! Deign to make us sharers in thy goods, and introduce us into heaven, of which thou art the blessed gate! Amen.

SIXTY-NINTH EXERCISE.

FOR THE *FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN—25TH MARCH.

INSTRUCTION: MARY COULD NOT HUMBLE HERSELF MORE THAN SHE DID IN HER ANNUNCIATION, AND GOD COULD NOT EXALT HER MORE THAN HE DID IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee! blessed art thou amongst women.”—*St. Luke*, chap. ii.

AFTER having resolved to become man in order to redeem mankind, and thus to manifest to the world his infinite goodness, God, deigning to choose his holy Mother on earth, sought the humblest of all women. That was the Virgin Mary. Mary, at the Incarnation of the Word, could not humble herself more than she did; and God could not exalt her more than he did;—two truths equally glorious to God, honorable to Mary, and very consoling for ourselves.

The Spouse in the Canticle says: “My spikenard sent forth the odor thereof.” (*Cant. i.*) Now, by the spikenard, which is a very small and very low plant, the Holy Ghost typified the humility of Mary, his divine spouse, who, by the odor of her virtues, drew the eternal Word from heaven into her virginal womb.

It was, in fact, the humility of Mary that chiefly made her so dear to God, and caused her to be chosen for the Mother of his Son, when he determined to redeem the world; but to manifest his glory, and to make known the merit of Mary, the Word made flesh would not be-

come her Son without first having her consent. When the humble Virgin, secluded in her poor cell, sighed continually after the coming of the Messiah, and redoubled her desires and her prayers that God would send the Redeemer, the Angel Gabriel came to bring her the great tidings, and saluted her, saying: "Hail, O Virgin full of grace, the Lord is with thee! O Mary, thou art blessed amongst all women, because thou art humble; and in view of that great humility, God has chosen thee to be his Mother."

Mary, reflecting on the words of the angel, was troubled. That trouble was not caused by his aspect (he appeared under a human form, as many maintain), but rather by the words which the angel addressed to her. That trouble was, then, the effect of her humility, on hearing praises entirely opposed to the low opinion she had of herself. She abhorred all praise; and her whole desire, as she herself revealed to Saint Bridget, was that her Creator and Benefactor should be praised and blessed.

But at least Mary knew, by the Holy Scriptures, that the time foretold by the prophets for the coming of the Messiah had already arrived,—the seventy weeks of Daniel already ended, the sceptre passed from Judah, according to the prophecy of Jacob, into the hands of a foreign king. She knew that a virgin was to be the Mother of the Messiah; and she heard praises given to herself, which seemed only to belong to the Mother of God. Those praises only served to inspire her with great fear; "and as the Saviour," says Saint Peter Chrysologus, "would be strengthened by an angel, so Gabriel, seeing Mary so much agitated by those words, encouraged her by saying: 'Fear not, Mary, neither be

astonished at the titles of grandeur that I have given thee, because as thou art very humble and very lowly in thine own estimation, God who exalts the humble has rendered thee worthy to find the grace which men had lost; and to that end, he has preserved thee from the stain contracted by all the children of Adam. He has favored thee, from the moment of thy conception, with a grace much greater than that of all the Saints; and now he exalts thee so far, as even to choose thee for his Mother.' ”

“ Delay not, O Mary!” says Saint Bernard; “ the angel awaits thine answer; but we expect it much more impatiently, we who are already condemned. Thou art offered the price of our salvation, the Incarnation of the divine Word in thy womb. If thou consentest to receive him for thy Son, we shall instantly be delivered from death. The more that same God our Master has been taken with thy beauty, the more he desires thy consent, after which he has resolved to save the world.”

“ Answer, O merciful Virgin,” says Saint Augustine; “ answer! Delay no longer the salvation of the world. It is on thy consent that it depends.” (*Serm. xxi., De Temp.*)

Mary replies: she says to the angel—“ Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word!” O admirable reply! Could all the wisdom of angels and of men have suggested one more beautiful, more humble, more prudent, had they even thought over it a million of years? O powerful answer, which rejoiced heaven, and brought to earth an immense ocean of graces! An answer, in fine, which had scarce gone forth from the humble heart of Mary, when it drew from the bosom of the eternal Father the divine Word, to be-

come incarnate in her chaste womb! As soon as Mary had pronounced those words, the Son of God became also the Son of Mary. *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*—"be it done unto me according to thy word." "Admirable words!" exclaims Saint Thomas of Villanova. "By the other *fiat* God created the heavens and the earth; but by this *fiat* of Mary a God became man, like unto us."

Let us consider the great humility of the Blessed Virgin, in this answer! She well knew how lofty was the dignity of the Mother of God; and the angel assured her that she was that fortunate Mother chosen by the Lord. But she esteemed herself none the more; she indulged in no vain complacency because of that elevation. She sees on one side her own nothingness, and on the other the infinite majesty of her God, who chose her for his Mother. She feels herself unworthy of so great an honor; nevertheless, she will not oppose the divine will. Wholly occupied with her own nothingness, and the extreme desire to unite herself more closely with God, she abandons herself entirely to the divine will. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she replies. Her duty is to do what the Lord commands her. It is as though she had said: "The Lord chooses me for his Mother, I who have nothing in my own right, I who owe to God all that I am. Who could imagine that it is for my own merit? How could a slave merit to be made the Mother of her Lord and Master?" "Let the bounty of the Master, then, be praised; but far be all praise from the slave. For it is only," said that humble Virgin, "the divine goodness that could have chosen a creature so vile as myself, to raise her to so high a dignity."

Lucifer, endowed with great beauty, would raise his

triumph above the stars, and make himself like unto the Most High. (*Isaiah*, chap. xiv.) What would not that monster of pride have said and pretended had he been adorned with the gifts of Mary! The humble Virgin of Nazareth was far from acting so; the more she saw herself elevated, the more she humbled herself. "Ah, Mary," concludes Saint Bernard, "a humility so rare, so precious, made thee worthy the regards of the Almighty; it shed charms on thy beauty, and inflamed the Lord with love for thee!"

The humility of Mary was as a ladder by which the Lord deigned to come down on earth to become incarnate in the womb of that illustrious Virgin; and that virtue was the most perfect and the most proximate disposition she brought to be the Mother of God. The prophet Isaiah had foretold it by saying that the divine blossom—that is to say, the only Son of God—was to be born, not from the top of the trunk of the plant of Jesse, but from the very *root*, precisely to signify the humility of the Mother, as is remarked by blessed Albertus and the abbot of Celles. The truly humble eyes of Mary, which unceasingly regarded the Divine greatness, never losing sight of her own nothingness, attracted God into her womb. Why did the Holy Ghost praise the beauty of his spouse in saying that she had the eyes of the dove? "Thy eyes are doves' eyes." (*Cant.* iv. 1.) "Because," says the Abbé Francon, "Mary regarding God with the eyes of a simple and humble dove, pleased him by her beauty, enchained him in the bonds of love, and inclosed him as a captive in her virginal womb."

Thus Mary, in the Incarnation of the Word, could not humble herself more than she did; it remains for us to see how God could elevate her more than he then did.

To comprehend the degree of greatness to which Mary was raised, it would be necessary to comprehend the greatness of God. It suffices, then, to say that God made her his Mother, to show that God could not exalt her more. God, in making himself the Son of Mary, raised her above the angels and the saints. St. Arnaud says that she is above every creature; and St. Ephrem, that she is without comparison more elevated than all the celestial spirits. God alone excepted, says St. Andrew of Crete, all are inferior to her. St. Anselm exclaims: "O unparalleled Virgin, there is nothing to equal thee, for all that exists is beneath thee. God alone is superior to thee. All creatures are inferior to thee."

"Let no one be astonished, then," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "if the holy evangelists who publish in detail the praises of a St. John the Baptist, of a Magdalen, say so little of Mary. It suffices to know that she is the Mother of God; that one quality is sufficient, it includes all the finest attributes. "Give her what title thou wilt," says St. Anselm, "that of Queen of heaven, Mistress of the angels, or any other title of honor, you will honor her less than by simply calling her the Mother of God. "The reason of this is obvious, for the nearer any thing is to its principle, the more it receives of its perfection; so Mary being the creature nearest to God, she has received from him more graces, perfections, and more greatness than all others." "Her dignity of Mother of God," says Suarez, "is of an order superior to any other dignity, because that dignity belongs in some sort to the order of union with a divine person," says Denis the Carthusian; "that is to say, that after the hypostatical union, there is none closer than that of Mother of God." "The dignity of Mother of God," concludes the blessed

Albertus, "is immediately after that of God; Mary could not, therefore, be more closely united to God than she was, unless by becoming as God himself."

EXAMPLE.

Progress in Knowledge obtained by the intercession of Mary.

The history of Saint Dominick furnishes us with a fine example, in the person of Albert the Great. Some time after his entrance into the order of Saint Dominick, his little capacity for the sciences threatened to make him lose his vocation. Confused at seeing himself excelled by all his fellow-students in philosophy, he thought of taking some other course, when he had a dream which caused him to change his resolution. He dreamed one night that he set up a ladder against a wall of the monastery, in order to go away. As he ascended, he saw on the top of the wall four noble ladies, one of whom appeared more distinguished than the other three. As soon as he came near them, one of the four pushed him violently, and threw him from the top of the ladder. He tried to go up again; another of the ladies pushed him back again. As he persisted in his efforts to get away, the third asked him what was the reason of his doing so. "It is," replied Albert, "because I see others making great progress in philosophy, whilst I apply myself to it in vain, and that is what induces me to leave the monastery." The one who interrogated him, pointing then to the Blessed Virgin, "Behold," said she, "the Queen of heaven; address yourself to her." At the same time the lady presented him to the Mother of God, who received him most affably, and asked him what he desired. He replied that he desired to learn philosophy, which he had

long studied without being able to understand any thing of it. The holy Virgin replied that he should obtain what he desired; "but," added she, "in order to show you that you owe that grace to my intercession, it shall one day happen that when you are publicly teaching, you shall forget, in a moment, all that you previously knew." The sequel showed that it was not a dream, for thenceforth he made astonishing progress in philosophy and theology; and, to verify the prediction fully, three years before his death, while he was teaching at Cologne, he suddenly forgot all that he had known, so that not even a vestige of it remained. Then, having related to his disciples all that had formerly happened to him, he retired, charging them at the same time to have recourse to the Mother of goodness, whose special protection he had so wonderfully experienced.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By St. Charles Borromeo.)

Kneel, and say the *Angelus*. It is a subject of confusion for many who pretend to be devout to Mary, and who yet neglect to salute her at the sound of the bell, or to do it kneeling. That prayer recalls the whole mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and, consequently, that of the Annunciation of Mary. It cannot but be agreeable to her, and draw down many signal graces on those who recite it with fervor. Saint Charles Borromeo not only said it always kneeling, with his head uncovered, but in his journeys he alighted from his horse, and prostrated himself, sometimes in the mud, to give to the Mother of God that mark of his love and respect. The sovereign Pontiffs have granted a great number of indulgences to the daily recitation of the *Angelus*.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Bernard.)

Admirable Virgin, worthy of all sorts of honors ! Woman blessed above all women ! Thou hast repaired the loss of our first parents, and restored life to their posterity ! We celebrate thee, O Mary, we thank thee, we praise thee, we exalt thee, we glorify thee, as the source of grace, the mediatrix of salvation, and the repairer of ages ! Amen.

SEVENTIETH EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—JULY 2.

INSTRUCTION : THE HOLY VIRGIN SHOWS US IN HER VISITATION THAT SHE IS THE TREASURER OF GRACES, AND DISPENSES THEM TO THOSE WHO ASK THEM WITH FERVOR.

“I will make the day of your visit, saith the Lord, a day of peace, grace, and happiness.”—*Isaiah*, chap. lx.

It is not without reason that the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin is also called the Feast of Our Lady of Grace. The prodigies which God wrought on that day by the Blessed Virgin, in favor of the house of Zachary, showed that she was the dispenser of them, and that she pours them forth on all those who ask them of her with pious confidence.

When the Blessed Virgin learned from the angel

Gabriel that her cousin Elizabeth was six months gone with child, inwardly enlightened by the Holy Ghost, she knew that it was the will of the incarnate Word, who had become her Son, to begin to manifest to the world the riches of his mercy, by bestowing his first graces upon all that pious family. On the instant, Mary quitted her beloved retirement, and departed on her visit to Elizabeth. This visit of the Blessed Virgin was not like those of worldlings, which usually consist of ceremonies and vain protestations. At her first word Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and John the Baptist was sanctified, as he showed, by trembling with joy in his mother's womb, as Elizabeth declared. Those first fruits of redemption passed through Mary. She was the channel by which grace was communicated to John the Baptist; and the Holy Ghost granted the gift of prophecy to Zacharias, with other blessings for that holy family. Such were the first graces that we know to have been granted on earth by the Word, after his incarnation. It is reasonable to believe that God then established Mary as that universal aqueduct, as Saint Bernard calls her, through whom were thenceforth to pass all the other graces which the Lord should vouchsafe to grant to us. It is, then, with reason, that the Mother of God is called the treasurer and dispenser of the divine graces; that she is typified in the Gospel by that field that contains the treasure of God, which is Jesus Christ, and which is to be purchased at any price. "The supreme will of the universal Master," says Saint Bernard, "is, that all graces are granted through the intermediation of Mary." Whosoever says all, excepts nothing. But as, to obtain something we must have the firm confidence that we shall obtain it, let us, then, have that

disposition when we address ourselves to Mary; and let us remain convinced that she will deign to hear the prayers which we fervently address to her.

Mary herself explains why God has placed in her hands all the mercies which he destines for us. "It is in order," as she tells us, by the mouth of Wisdom, "that I may enrich them that love me." (*Prov. viii.*) And the Church only applies those words to her, to show us that the graces, the benedictions, and the benefits of every kind that God has placed in the bosom of the Blessed Virgin, are preserved there only to be given to those who claim them. Saint Bernard adds, on this subject, that "it is the will of God that Mary should be a universal channel of mercy, so that, through her, grace might continually descend on men." Afterwards, seeking the reason why the angel, having already found Mary full of grace, he yet told her that the Holy Ghost was going to overshadow her, to fill her with still more abundant benedictions,—“It is,” says he, “that Mary was, it is true, full of grace for herself; but the Holy Ghost gave her a superabundant measure of grace, in order that she might provide for all our wants.”

Let us, then, reanimate our confidence more and more, as often as we have recourse to Mary; and let us continually remember the two great qualities of that incomparable Mother, namely, *the desire of doing good, and the power she holds from her Son of obtaining all that she asks.* Thoroughly to understand Mary's desire to be propitious and serviceable to us, it suffices to consider the mystery of her Visitation. Through that spirit of charity which continually glowed in her heart, she decided on making a toilsome journey, to commence her great office of dispenser of grace. Delighted that she had the power of

being useful, transported with joy at the thought of the good she was about to do, and wholly occupied with that mystery of charity, she set out in haste,—*Abiit cum festinatione*, an expression which the Evangelist does not use when he speaks of the return of Mary after she had fulfilled her mission.

Mary, in ascending to heaven, did not lose that spirit of charity towards men. On the contrary, it increased in her, because she better knows our wants, and more compassionates our miseries. She feels a more lively desire to assist us, than we ourselves have of being assisted. The office and the inclination of that tender Mother are continually to solicit graces, incessantly to distribute them, abundantly to enrich her faithful servants. To ask nothing of her, is to offend her. Thomas à Kempis makes the Blessed Virgin speak thus: “I invite you all to have recourse to me—I expect you all, I desire you all; and I never despise any sinner, how desperate soever he may be, when he implores my assistance.”

Whoever invokes her, then, finds her always disposed to succor him, and to obtain for him, by her powerful prayers, all the graces that conduce to salvation.

The Saviour loves his Mother to pray for us, because all the graces he then grants are granted less to us than to his holy Mother. Her prayers are so agreeable to him, that he can refuse her nothing.

If we desire graces, let us address ourselves to Mary. She revealed to Saint Matilda, that “the Holy Ghost, in filling her with all his sweetness, had rendered her so agreeable to God, that whosoever asked graces through her intercession, was sure to obtain them.” It is that the prayers of Mary, being those of a mother, have

much more efficacy than ours. Let us, then, never depart from the feet of that Queen of mercy. Let us visit her often; let us honor her in every way, and love her with all our heart. Let us hope to obtain all from her powerful intercession, and we shall effectually experience that Mary is the treasurer of all grace, and that whosoever applies to her with confidence and fervor, obtains the effect of his prayers.

EXAMPLE.

Mary forms her servants to prayer and the interior life.

As prayer is one of the principal means we have of advancing and maintaining ourselves in good, we need not wonder that the Mother of God inspires her servants to practise it, and sometimes even takes upon herself the care of instructing them. The blessed Elzear, Count of Ariam, as Surius relates, received that grace from the Mother of goodness. His nurse, a virtuous woman, fearing for her pupil, very often recommended him to God. One day while she was hearing Mass, and praying with redoubled fervor for her dear nursling, she heard a voice which told her that "the Queen of heaven had taken care of his instruction." The holy woman, fearing that there might be some illusion in this fact, implored the Lord to make known to her more certainly if that promise really came from him. Her prayer was granted even before she left the church. But as it is the property of humble souls to be always distrustful of themselves, she laid the case before her confessor. That prudent director, in order to avoid the risk of giving a wrong decision, resolved to have a private conversation with the little Elzear, and to learn from him how he

proceeded in his exercises of piety, but especially in prayer, and in what way he had learned to make it. The young count, who knew nothing of the priest's object in questioning him, ingenuously replied, that he began his meditation by recommending himself to the Blessed Virgin; that he entreated her to suggest to him what he ought to pray for, and to impress deeply on his heart the sentiments with which the Holy Ghost inspired him; that he then said the Angelical Salutation, and that after that little act of homage to his good Mother, the time of prayer passed in good and fervent affections, without his ever happening to feel the least weariness or disgust. The religious necessarily judged that the Blessed Virgin, who cherished that child, had indeed taken care to instruct him, and to procure for him the gift of prayer.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By Saint Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury.)

Solemnly consecrate yourself to the service of the Blessed Virgin. Saint Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, had always such a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that in his earliest years he made a vow of chastity before one of her images; and as a mark of his engagement in the service of the Queen of angels, he placed on a finger of the statue a ring, on which was engraved the Angelical Salutation. It was remarked, that, after his death, the angelical salutation was also found engraved on his episcopal ring; the Mother of God having deigned to show by this token how agreeable to her was the action of her faithful servant. It will be the same with what we shall do in her honor, after having solemnly consecrated ourselves to her.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(Recited in Saint Mary Major's, in Rome, before the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, painted by Saint Luke. To this prayer Pius II. attached a hundred days' indulgence.)

O Virgin most pure, dear Mother of God, refuge of sinners, and my tender Mother! obtain for me through the most sweet name of Jesus, a lively faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity, a perfect sorrow for my sins, and a spotless purity of heart and soul. Amen.

SEVENTY-FIRST EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN—FEBRUARY 2.

INSTRUCTION: MARY MADE THAT DAY THE GREATEST OF ALL SACRIFICES, SINCE SHE OFFERED TO GOD THE LIFE OF HER OWN SON.

“Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire, but thou hast pierced ears for me.”—Ps. xxxix.

ANIMATED by a spirit of humility and obedience, Mary wished to follow the precepts of the old law. She was not subject to purification, since she was always a virgin and always pure, even after becoming a mother. Nevertheless, she would go and be purified like other mothers. She also came to present her Son to the eternal Father; but she offered her Son in a very different way from that in which other mothers offered theirs. They offered them, knowing well that the offering was only a mere

ceremony, so that on redeeming them they recovered them without fear of having still to offer them to death. Whereas Mary really offered her Son to death, and in the certainty that the sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ, which she then made, was one day to be actually consummated on the tree of the cross. What an example does she not give us by that double sacrifice, made for the glory of God and the love of man's salvation!

The eternal Father had determined to save man, lost by sin, and to deliver him from everlasting death. But as it was also his will that his divine justice should not be deprived of the satisfaction due thereto, he spared not the life of his own Son, who became man to redeem mankind. He would have him expiate, in all rigor, the sin of the first man. It was to that end that he sent him on earth, and gave him Mary for his Mother. But as he would not that the Word should become the Son of Mary unless she gave her consent, so it was not his will that Jesus should sacrifice his life for the salvation of men without the consent of Mary, in order that the heart of the Mother should be sacrificed at the same time as the life of the Son. Saint Thomas teaches, that "mothers have a special right over their children." Jesus being absolutely innocent, and meriting no punishment for any fault of his own, it seemed proper that he should not be destined to the cross, as victim of the sins of men, without the consent of the Mother who, of her own free will, offered him to death. But although Mary, from the moment she was Mother of Jesus Christ, had consented to his death, it was the Lord willed it, so that she should on that day make, in the Temple, a solemn sacrifice much greater than that of herself, in offering her Son to divine justice. It is for that reason

that Saint Epiphanius gives her the name of priest. What heroic virtue she must have had to subscribe, of her own free will, to the sentence of death on her beloved Son! For that very purpose it is that Mary journeys to Jerusalem. She walks courageously to the place of sacrifice, and, in bitterness of heart, carries the victim in her arms. She enters the Temple, approaches the altar, and there, penetrated with sentiments of modesty, humility, and devotion, she presents her Son to the Most High. At that moment, Saint Simeon, to whom the Lord had promised that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah, takes the divine infant from the hands of his Mother, and, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he announces to her what the holocaust she then made was to cost her, as her soul was also to be sacrificed, pierced by a sword of grief. It is to mothers that I appeal to form any idea of the anguish which the Mother of the Saviour must have felt at that sorrowful prediction! What rational man fails to perceive that the maternal feeling is the most courageous, the most tender, the most constant, the most devoted, and the most tried, of all feelings? Most mothers share their tenderness amongst several children, while Mary concentrates all hers upon one Son. And what a Son!—the most beautiful of the children of men; possessing, in himself alone, in the highest perfection, merits, qualities, virtues, scattered amongst all children. That sublime and tender Mother knows what right her Son has to an infinite, supernatural love, both as God and as the Redeemer of men. On that account, she sees only in that beloved child the victim that she must voluntarily deliver up to death, in order to redeem from eternal death the unhappy children of Adam.

Mary is, then, at the same time the most fortunate of mothers, in being the mother of a God; and the mother most deserving of compassion, because she is overwhelmed with affliction, seeing her son foredoomed to a death of torture.

What mother would consent to give birth to a son, if she knew that he must one day die on the scaffold before her eyes? Mary willingly accepts that Son on so hard a condition; and not only does she accept him, *but she herself on this day offers him up with her own hand to the divine justice.*

"Mary," says Saint Bonaventure, "would have very willingly accepted for herself the pains and the death of her Son, but, in obedience to God, she made the great offering of the life of her Son, Jesus; she overcame, though with the most heart-rending grief, all the love she bore him." Hence it was that Mary, in that offering, must have done herself more violence than if she had offered herself to endure all that the Saviour was to suffer; she outdid the generosity of all the martyrs, since the martyrs offered up only their life, but the Blessed Virgin offered up the life of her Son, which she loved and valued incomparably more than her own.

The grief of Mary did not end with that offering, it was then only commencing; for, from that moment, the divine Mother had incessantly present to her mind the death of Jesus, and all the pains that he was to endure in his Passion. It was not only in the Temple, therefore, that Mary offered her divine Son to death, but she offered him every moment of her life, for she revealed to Saint Bridget that the grief announced by Saint Simeon ceased not till after her Assumption. And Saint Ber

nard, speaking of the great sadness in which Mary was plunged on this day, says: "From that time she died every moment of her life, because she was every moment tortured with grief for the future death of her beloved Son, a grief more cruel than death itself."

It is because of the merit she acquired in offering to God that great sacrifice for the salvation of the world, that Mary is called the restorer of mankind, the redeemer of the lost world, the remedy of our misfortunes, the Mother of all the faithful, the Mother of the living, the Mother of life; for, at the death of Jesus, Mary so united her will to that of her Son, that those two wills together offered one and the same sacrifice. Since Mary, by the merit of her sufferings, and the offering of her Son, was made Mother of all men, it is reasonable to believe that it is by her they receive the divine graces, which are the fruits of the merits of Jesus Christ, and the means of acquiring eternal life.

EXAMPLE.

Devotion to Mary practised by all dignitaries both of the clergy and of the secular laity.

If it were only the common people who enrolled themselves under the banners of Mary, devotion to her might, perhaps, be regarded as one of those practices which are without foundation, as without utility. But a far loftier and more correct idea of it must of necessity be formed when we see it made illustrious by all dignities, both ecclesiastical and secular. First, in going through all the orders of the hierarchy of the church, we find its ranks filled with men the most commendable, both by their piety towards Mary, and the zeal they displayed in

extending her worship, devoting themselves entirely to her.*

Very many Popes have shown themselves zealous servants of the Mother of God, and have placed in the rank of their holiest duties what they did in her honor.

After them, the Sacred College presents a number of its members devoted to the service of Mary.

Almost all the bishops have also been servants of the Blessed Virgin. There is scarcely a diocese which has not had many of its prelates zealous propagators of devotion to the Queen of heaven. These depositaries of the faith have been distinguished, some by an exemplary holiness, others by superior talents, all by an entire devotion to Mary.

It would doubtless be unjust not to mention, while speaking on this subject, the inferior members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but it would be useless to make even an attempt to enumerate them. Thus all the dignitaries of the Church are found enrolled in the sacred militia of Mary. The great ones of the world shine

* In the conclave of 1829, when Pius VIII. was elected, Cardinal Cappelari had twenty-four votes, on the 25th of March, the day of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, who seemed, thereby, to point him out to the Church, to be its supreme pastor. On the 2d of February, 1831, the Feast of the Purification of Mary, he was elected Pope. On the 15th of August, 1832, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Mother of God, he gave his immortal encyclical to the Christian world; on the 8th of September, 1835, by his order commenced that solemn procession over which he presided, and in which was carried with so much pomp the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, painted by Saint Luke, and of which the historical account was published in Rome. So that Gregory XVI., whose life was full of acts of devotion to Mary, has been called the Blessed Virgin's Pope.

therein with no less splendor: emperors and kings have been known to make it their duty to assist at every procession in honor of the Virgin, and to honor with their friendship and esteem all the great servants of Mary; monarchs who have won the admiration of the whole world by their tender devotion to the Queen of heaven; warriors more illustrious by devotion to the Blessed Virgin than by victories gained over their enemies.

France, Spain, England, Portugal, Poland, Sardinia, the Two Sicilies, have had their thrones made illustrious by sovereigns greater by their love for the service of the Blessed Virgin than by the heroic qualities whereby they added lustre to their diadem. Queens have been worthy emulators of their pious husbands; and amongst the princes, princesses, and the great and powerful nobles of the various States of Europe, a great number have been more anxious to pass for zealous clients of Mary than to win the highest dignities of the world.

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By the Blessed Peter of Luxemburg.)

Prepare yourself for the feasts of the Blessed Virgin on the vigil by practising some mortification, or other work of piety, such as fasting, alms-giving, or visiting the sick. This was one of the favorite practices of the blessed Peter of Luxemburg.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Ildefonso.)

O Mother of my Saviour! thou art blessed amongst all women, pure amongst all virgins, queen of all creatures. Behold, all nations call thee pre-eminently blessed. Grant that I may publish thy greatness as much as I can

publish them, that I may love thee as much as I can love thee; that I may invoke thee as much as I shall be able to invoke thee; and that I may contribute to make thee honored as far as my zeal and my strength will permit! Amen.

SEVENTY-SECOND EXERCISE.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN—AUGUST 15.

INSTRUCTION : ON THE SOLEMNITY AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

“And they brought the Ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the Tabernacle.”—*II. Kings*, chap. vi.

“It would seem fitting,” says Saint Bernard, “that the Church, on this day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, should invite us to weep rather than to rejoice,” since that tender Mother is departing from this world and leaving us deprived of her presence. But no; the Church invites us to rejoice, and with reason; for if we love our Mother we should prefer her glory to our own consolation. A son rejoices although he is to be separated from his mother, when he knows that she is going to take possession of a kingdom. Mary is now Queen of heaven; we ought, therefore, to share in her joy, if we truly love her, considering how solemn and how triumphant was her Assumption.

After Jesus Christ had accomplished, by his death, the work of the redemption of men, the angels burned with

desire to see him in the celestial country; they incessantly repeated those words of David: "Come, Lord, come, now that thou hast redeemed men; come to thy kingdom with us, and bring with thee the ark of thy sanctification—that is to say, thy Mother, the ark which thou didst sanctify by dwelling in her womb!" It is thus that Saint Bernardine makes the angels speak. The Lord at length vouchsafed to grant that desire of the whole celestial court, and called Mary to paradise. But as he had formerly ordained that the ark of the Old Testament should be with great pomp introduced into the city of David, it was with a far different and more glorious pomp that he ordained the entrance of Mary into heaven. The prophet Elias was transported thither in a chariot of fire, and that chariot, according to the interpreters, was nothing else than a group of angels who raised him from the earth. "But to transport thee thither, O Mother of my God," says the abbé Rupert, "a single group of angels was not sufficient; the King of heaven came himself with all his celestial court to accompany thee."

The Saviour came down from heaven to meet his Mother, and said to her: "Quit, my dear Mother, my pure dove, quit this vale of tears in which thou hast suffered so much for my sake; come in body and in soul to enjoy the fruit of thy holy life. The glory I have prepared for thee is immense; come and take thy seat beside me on my throne; come, receive thy crown as Queen of the universe." Mary quits the earth, and remembering all the many graces she had there received from her God, she regards it at once with affection and compassion, since she leaves poor children there amidst so many miseries and dangers. Jesus holds out his hand to her; and that blessed Mother, gently leaning on her beloved, rises into

the air, pierces the clouds, and arrives at the gates of heaven. The angels then repeated with transport what they had said on the entrance of Jesus Christ into the celestial dwelling: "Hasten, princes of the holy Jerusalem; arise and open your gates that the King and Queen may this day enter into their kingdom." The celestial spirits, seeing Mary enter, ask each other, in admiration: "Who, then, is this admirable creature who comes from the desert of earth, from that place so full of thorns and briars? Behold how pure she is, and how rich in all sorts of virtues; she leans upon her Beloved; he deigns to accompany her, to complete the splendor of her triumph, and to render more solemn her taking possession of the kingdom of her divine Son. It is the Mother of our God, it is our Queen, it is the blessed amongst women, the full of grace, the holy of holies, the beloved of God, the immaculate, the dove, the fairest of all creatures; let us bless, honor, praise, and love her!" And, uniting their voices, they exclaim: "Our divine Queen, thou art the glory of paradise, the joy of our celestial country, and the honor of us all: welcome, ever blessed! behold thy kingdom, reign over us forever; we all are thy servants, and it is our happiness to obey thee."

The reception which King Solomon gave to his mother was but a rough figure of that which the Saviour gives to-day to the Blessed Virgin; that truly pacific king went to meet his mother, saluted her profoundly, and, having seated himself on his throne, ordered a throne to be placed on his right hand for his mother. In the mystery of this day is accomplished that prodigy which Saint John admires in heaven: "A woman clothed with the sun, having the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head."

"It is impossible to express," say the Fathers, "the glory and the sublimity of the throne of the Blessed Virgin." "And that is not surprising," adds Arnaud de Chartres: "the glory of Mary, body and soul, in heaven, is not like that of others ; she is in herself a particular order; she holds rank incomparably higher than that of the angels themselves ; since the glory that Mary possesses is not unlike that of the incarnate Word; it is in some sort the same." Saint Peter Damian exclaims that, "in all but divinity, the Assumption of Mary was attended by more pomp and display than the Ascension of Jesus Christ."

Mary, introduced into heaven, took her place on the sublime throne that had been prepared for her; and all the Saints hastened to congratulate her on her arrival, and salute her as their Queen, the virgins said to her: "We are queens of this kingdom, O incomparable Virgin, but thou art our Queen, because thou wert the first who gave us the example of consecrating our virginity to God ; we bless and thank thee for it."

The martyrs hailed her as their Queen, because, by her great constancy amid the pains of her Son's passion, she had taught them, and even obtained for them by her merits, the strength to give their life for the faith. "Thou wert our hope," say the patriarchs, "and it was for thee that we so long sighed." "Thou it is," said Adam and Eve, "who hast repaired the ruin we had entailed on mankind, for thou hast restored to the world the benediction lost by our fault; by thee it is that we are saved; blessed be thou forever !"

Then came Saint Simeon forward to kiss her feet, reminding her, joyfully, of the day when he received from her own hands the infant Jesus ; Saint Zachary and

Saint Elizabeth, who thanked her anew for the visit she had paid them, with so much humility and charity, and in which they had received such precious graces; Saint John the Baptist, who thanked her for having sanctified him by her words. But what must not her own parents, Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, have said to her when they saluted her? Great God! with what tenderness they bless her! "Ah, Mary," they exclaimed, "the most tender object of our love, how happy were we to have thee for our daughter! Thou art now our Queen, because thou art the Mother of our God, and in that quality we salute thee and offer thee our profound homage."

Who could describe the affection with which Saint Joseph, her dear spouse, came forward to salute her, or the joy felt by that holy patriarch, on seeing his beloved spouse ushered into heaven with so much pomp, and become the Queen of Paradise. With what tenderness must he not have said to her: "Ah! my Queen and my spouse, when will it be given me to thank the Lord as I ought for having made thee my spouse—thou who art his true mother? It was by thee that I merited on earth to serve the childhood of the eternal Word incarnate, to have him so often in my arms, and to receive so many special graces. Blessed be the moments which I employed during my life in serving Jesus and thee, my holy spouse! Behold our Jesus: let us now be consoled, he no longer lies upon hay in a stable, as we saw him at his birth in Bethlehem; he no longer lives in poverty and obscurity as at Nazareth; he is no longer fastened to an infamous gibbet as at Jerusalem; but he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, as King and Master of heaven and earth: we shall never more leave

his feet, but shall praise and bless him through all eternity."

Mary prostrated herself to adore the majesty of God, thanked him for all the graces he had bestowed upon her, and especially for having made her mother of the Word. With what love the holy Trinity blessed her! What a welcome the eternal Father gave to his daughter; the Son to his mother; the Holy Ghost to his spouse! The eternal Father crowns her, giving her a portion of his power; the Son gives her a portion of his wisdom; and the Holy Ghost fills her with his gifts. The three divine persons place her throne at the right hand of Jesus, and, declaring her universal Queen of heaven and of earth, commanded the angels and all creatures to recognize her as such, and in that quality to serve and obey her.

Let us enter into the sentiments of all the heavenly Jerusalem, on this day so glorious to the Mother of God; let us admire and revere her Assumption and her triumph in heaven; let us think with joy and with confidence reflect that that *Mother of God is our mother*, that that Queen so powerful with God, is our protectress, our mediatrix, our advocate, and that it depends only on ourselves to have that treasure of the Almighty, that distributor of graces, abundantly dispense them to us.

What consolation for the Christian who has a tender devotion to the Mother of God! What a subject of confidence for the true servants of Mary! Under such a protectress, have they any thing to fear from the enemy of salvation? What can all the unchained powers of hell do against them? It is more especially on this day that we should renew our act of consecration to her service, and promise her that we will pass no day of our

life, without honoring her with a peculiar worship, placing in her all our hope, all our confidence in her goodness and in her mercy.

EXAMPLE.

Nothing is more proper to merit for us all the graces of heaven than devotion to Mary.

This truth is proved not by a single example, but by that of all the nations that have delighted in honoring the Blessed Virgin with a particular worship. Now, this unanimous consent of so many peoples, distant from each other and so different in their manners and customs, could not have taken place had they not all regarded devotion to Mary as the most excellent of religious practices, God sending down upon those who faithfully observe it the abundance of all graces.

The great number of churches which bear the name of the Blessed Virgin in the most Christian kingdom (France) sufficiently proves how much she has been venerated there. It is to be remarked, in the first place, that she is the special patroness of the entire nation; and then, that most of the dioceses and the majority of the parishes recognize her as their titular patroness; the finest temples are consecrated to her, and the most celebrated sanctuaries are under her invocation.

It would take entire volumes to relate the prodigies which the Blessed Virgin has wrought in Germany, that bulwark of Christendom, as historians call it. The miracles performed at the one church of Our Lady of Helbron, in the parish of Bockenheim, would suffice to prove that the principal characteristic of the Germans is devotion to Mary.

In Spain, amongst the monuments of the devotion of

its inhabitants to the Mother of God, one of the most celebrated is that of Montserrat, whose origin is miraculous, and which has lasted more than a thousand years; in all which time prodigies have been unceasingly multiplied in divers parts of the Catholic kingdom, where there is almost everywhere to be seen emblems, inscriptions, statues, and monuments in honor of Mary. It may be said that there are few Spaniards who do not wear some distinctive mark of her livery.

As for Portugal, if she had nothing else to prove her piety to the Queen of heaven than the celebrated chapel named "Ceira," in the diocese of Coïmbra, it would suffice to show that Mary is specially honored amongst the Portuguese.

In Poland there are a great number of celebrated churches consecrated to the Mother of God, and particularly "Our Lady of the Trinity," at Cracow; where the people have always venerated the image of Mary taken thither by Saint Hyacinth, and have never ceased to regard it as a secure asylum in times of misfortune.

To prove how great is devotion to the Blessed Virgin in Italy, it suffices to say that in the single city of Rome there are 46 churches dedicated to her, and that there is not one State in that religious country in which there are not monuments of the piety of the faithful to the Mother of God. There is especially, as every one knows, the miraculous chapels of Our Lady of Angels and of Loretto.

In Holland, the towns of Dordrecht and Schiedam furnish incontestable proofs that Mary has been specially honored there, as appears from the miraculous image of our Lady, to which St. Surius was so devout, and of which he published so many marvels.

The magnificent church built by the emperor Justinian in honor of the Blessed Virgin, about the year 530, proves that Syria does not yield to other nations in devotion to the Queen of heaven and earth ; the favors which the peoples of those countries have always obtained in the temples raised under her auspices, and bearing her name, on the Mount of Olives, on Mount Sinai, and at Jericho, prove how agreeable to that tender Mother was the homage paid to her in those places.

About a league and a half from Damascus, in Syria, the devotion to Mary was much celebrated on account of a miraculous image venerated there, from which flowed a balsam that cured all sorts of diseases, a balsam by means of which the Sultan of Damascus recovered his sight. In gratitude for this benefit he presented a lamp of solid silver, and twelve measures of oil yearly to keep it constantly burning before that image of the Blessed Virgin.

Finally, infected as Ethiopia has been by heresy and schism, it has nevertheless always preserved devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which is seen by a letter from one of its patriarchs to Pope Clement VIII., in which, expressing his ardent desire to see Ethiopia reunited to the Roman Church, he tells the sovereign Pontiff that he asked that favor from God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whom he calls their good and powerful advocate.

Thus the Blessed Virgin is honored by all nations, and her worship is universally diffused. Heaven grant that it may maintain itself, and be propagated more and more, for the glory of God, honor of his holy Mother, and the happiness of the faithful !

SEQUEL TO THE ABOVE, BY THE AMERICAN TRANSLATOR.

In England and in Scotland, devotion to the Mother of God, rudely interrupted by the shock of the great religious rebellion of the sixteenth century, but preserved from the blighting frost of heresy in the hearts of the faithful few, is now springing up again in renovated beauty and freshness; the oldest Catholic church now existing in London is that of St. Mary's, Moorfields; and in all the principal cities of England, and even in Scotland, the country of Knox, the very hotbed of Protestant fanaticism, churches are dedicated to the holy Mother of God.

In Ireland, devotion to Mary has never ceased to flourish; in the darkest times of that country's history, whilst its truly Catholic people were writhing under the lash of persecution, and freely shedding their blood for the faith, the star of Mary shed light on their dreary path of life, and they suffered and died in the hope of seeing in heaven "the Blessed Virgin," whom they had loved and served on earth. In no country of Europe has Mary been more steadily, more devotedly, more affectionately honored than in Ireland, from the very first introduction of Christianity into the country. The traces of that devotion exist the island over, in the ivy-draped ruins of times long anterior to the Reformation—oratories, churches, abbeys—in the humble fabrics erected during the penal days, and those which immediately succeeded them, and in the stately and imposing edifices, both ecclesiastical and monastic, with which the religious liberty of more recent years has enabled the people to manifest their inextinguishable love for, and their ardent devotion to the ever-glorious Virgin who gave a Redeemer to man-

kind. Perhaps in no country of Christendom are practices of devotion to Mary more generally diffused or more faithfully practised than in Ireland; the devotions of the Rosary and Scapular are, as it were, part of the very life of the people, and cherished to an extent scarcely known elsewhere, certainly not exceeded in any part of the world.

In the countries of the New World, devotion to Mary is no less deeply rooted or widely spread than in those of the Old. The peoples of Spanish America are eminently devoted to the Blessed Virgin; the empire of Brazil inherits the old Portuguese love of Mary which of old distinguished the princes and princesses of the house of Braganza; the Mexican people, made up of many tribes and nations, differing from each other in blood, in language, in manners, and in customs, are yet united by one strong tie, the Catholic faith and devotion to the Mother of God, who is as much venerated and as ardently loved throughout every province of Mexico, as she is in Spain itself. The Church of the United States, the great central region of North America, has long ago chosen Mary Immaculate for the patroness of the country. Some of the greatest and grandest cathedrals in the land are under her invocation; and throughout the length and breadth of the territories of the Great Republic, in the cities, and towns, and villages, churches are dedicated to her under the numerous titles wherewith the piety of the faithful love to honor her—the “Immaculate Conception,” the “Star of the Sea,” the “Gate of Heaven,” and other such beautiful and mystical titles.

In British America, our Lady is no less generally loved and revered. In Lower Canada, settled by the

French, and long known as *La Nouvelle France*, she reigns as queen. The entire province is under her patronage; and Montreal, the chief city, is still partially known as *Ville Marie*—the city of Mary—first given it by the pious French colonists. In that city, and in all that country, are everywhere seen monuments of the people's love to Mary. On one side of the mountain which overlooks the city of Montreal, is the chapel of *Notre Dame des Neiges* (Our Lady of the Snows), and on the opposite side is one more handsome and more spacious in honor of Our Lady of all Grace (*Notre Dame de toutes Graces*); whilst in the city below is the shrine, famous throughout Canada, of Our Lady of Good Aid (*Bons Secours*), also the splendid community chapel of the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady, dedicated to Our Lady of Pity; whilst in another convent chapel of the city she is honored as Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.

In each of the other British Provinces, Upper Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, Newfoundland, churches and cathedrals are dedicated to the holy Mother of God; each province, as it were, vieing with the other in their public manifestation of devotion to that great Queen.

America, then, is as eminently devoted to the Blessed Virgin (as regards Catholics) as Europe ever was, or is to-day. Truly all generations do call her blessed! From the rising to the setting of the sun her name is great among the Gentiles!

PRACTICE IN HONOR OF MARY.

(By all her true servants.)

This last practice is that which of all others best proves sincere devotion to Mary; it consists in the imitation of her virtues; it is the perfection of her devotion; and any one who applies themselves to retrace her in their conduct, is assured of being in every respect the true servant of the Blessed Virgin.

PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By Saint Augustine.)

O blessed Virgin, in offering, thyself, our prayers to the Lord, render them less unworthy of being presented to him, so that we may obtain by thy intercession what we confidently ask.

It is on thy powerful mediation that we reckon to obtain pardon of our sins, and afterwards the eternal reward, so that we may have the happiness of praising thee, and of magnifying forever the mercy of the Lord. Amen.

CONSECRATION TO MARY
OF THE TWELVE MONTHS OF THE YEAR;
OR,
THE TWELVE PRINCIPAL VIRTUES OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Presented for our Imitation.

THE fruit of devotion to Mary is the imitation of her virtues. It is essential, therefore, to know well those which were most strikingly manifested in that divine Mother during the course of her life, in order that, by practising them, we may become her imitators. That august Queen will not fail to protect in heaven those of her true servants who shall strive to resemble her on earth.

ON THE HUMILITY OF MARY.

"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."--*St. Luke*, chap. xiv.

HUMILITY is a virtue which inspires us with low sentiments of ourselves, and makes us confess our nothingness before God. "When a converted sinner humbles himself before God," says Saint Bernard, "he simply does justice to himself; but that Mary, as pure as the day-star, elevated above the angels themselves, thinks only of her high dignity to humble herself the more, it is a prodigy of humility. This low opinion which she

had of herself was manifested in her whole life, which was a constant practice of humility. She incessantly recalled to her mind that the Son of the Eternal, whom she had borne for nine months in her womb, had been thereby reduced to the lowest state of humiliation. She remembered all the annihilations, as it were, of the Saviour-God; all the ignominious treatment he had undergone, and which she herself had witnessed. The example of the Son perfected the humility of the Mother to such a degree, that she merited to be raised above the choirs of angels, in accordance with those words of the Gospel: "He who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Mary, then, is always the chief model of humility of heart, which consists in having a low opinion of one's self. Full of grace as she was, she, nevertheless, did not prefer herself to any one. It is not that she believed herself a sinner, for, in the words of Saint Teresa, "humility is truth;" and Mary knew that she had never offended God. She knew that she had received from him more graces than all other creatures—for an humble heart considers the special favors of God only to humble itself the more. But the same light which discovered to her the greatness and infinite goodness of God, also made known to her more clearly all the lowliness of her own person; and thence it was that she humbled herself more than all others. There never was on earth a creature more elevated and more perfect than Mary, because there never was one more humble.

It is an act of humility to conceal the gift of heaven. Mary would conceal from Saint Joseph the grace of having been made Mother of God, although it appeared necessary to disclose it to him, if only to deliver that

worthy spouse from the suspicions he might conceive as to her chastity, seeing her pregnant, and to avoid her own confusion. For, on the one side, Saint Joseph could not doubt the chastity of Mary; on the other, he was ignorant of the mystery of her pregnancy; and he would have quietly separated from her, had not the angel told him that his spouse was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Ghost. The humble Mary rejects the praises she receives, and refers all to God. Those who are humble serve others. Mary served Elizabeth for three months. "Elizabeth," says Saint Bernard, "was astonished that Mary came to visit her. She must have been still more astonished that she came, not to be served, but to serve." Those who are humble love seclusion, choose the place most remote from noise and bustle, and the vain pleasures of the world. Thus it was that Mary, at a later period, desiring to speak to her Son, who was preaching in a house, would not go in of herself and without his permission. Finally, when she was in the room with the apostles, she would take the lowest place. He who is humble, lives to be despised. Thus, we do not read in the Gospel that Mary appeared in Jerusalem whilst Jesus Christ was in triumph there, and receiving all sorts of honors on the part of the people; but she accompanied him to Calvary, fearless of dishonor in making herself known as the mother of the criminal who was about to suffer a cruel and terrible death.

"It is certain," says Saint Gregory of Nyssa, "that, seeing the corruption of our nature, there is perhaps no virtue more difficult to practise than humility." But we can never be true children of Mary if we be not humble. "If you cannot imitate Mary in her virginity," exclaims Saint Bernard, "imitate her in her humility."

ON THE FAITH OF MARY.

"O woman, great is thy faith."—*Saint Matthew*, chap. xv.

FAITH is a gift of God which the Holy Ghost communicates to us, to enlighten our mind and animate our heart. It was necessary, for the salvation of man, that he should subject his mind to the belief in things supernatural. First, for the glory of God. It is, in fact, to glorify him, to believe firmly, and adore humbly, mysteries above all created understanding. Second, it is in accordance with the nature of man, and advantageous to him, to be guided by the light of faith. His weak, limited, defective reason, required a fixed and immutable rule to direct it. Third, it was also necessary for man to believe in supernatural things, because he was created for a supernatural end, which is the eternal possession of God.

As regards faith, Mary has given us examples full of instruction and consolation. She believed in the ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity. The words of the angel pointed out to her the person of the Father, whose envoy he was to her; the person of the Son, by telling her that he whom she should conceive in her womb was the Son of the Most High; the person of the Holy Ghost, by adding, that it would be by his operation she should conceive.

Mary believed in the mystery of the Incarnation (which until then had been concealed under the figures and shadows of the law) when, in a stable, deserted and abandoned, he was born of her, a child, poor, passible, mortal, subject to the miseries of this life. She believed that that same child was the eternal God, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Mary believed it before the

Gospel had announced it to the world. She believed it before she had seen her Son perform miracles, and without asking for signs, like Gideon and Zacharias. She believed it with unshaken firmness. She gives, herself, a striking testimony of this faith, so perfect, in that canticle in which she exclaims, in a transport of holy joy: 'He that is mighty hath done great things in me!' What are those great things, if not that the Son of God was made man in her virginal womb? Hence it was that she said: "All generations shall call me blessed." That oracle has been accomplished, and shall be perpetuated till the end of time. Elizabeth, also, exalted by her own testimony the grandeur of Mary's faith, in those emphatic words: "Blessed art thou who hast believed."

As Mary was perfect in her faith, she was also most constant in the confession of that same faith, and in the great sacrifices which it required from her, although her heart should become as an ocean of grief. Full of courage, she quitted not the Saviour during his Passion; she followed him even to Calvary. Prostrate at the foot of the cross, she openly confessed him as her Son and her Redeemer, in the certain expectation of the resurrection and the full accomplishment of all that he had announced. Ah! here, indeed, we may exclaim: O woman, great is thy faith!

This faith of Mary, firm in its principles, and enduring under all trials, should be the model of ours, usually so weak and tottering. Faith is exposed to the temptations with which the enemy of our salvation assails us. God permits that we should sometimes have trials to bear, difficulties to combat, obstacles to surmount; but, strong in faith, let us resist with courage, and combat with constancy. Without stopping to examine the sug-

gestions of the demon, let us reply to them in this general and decisive way: "I believe all that faith teaches me, all that the Church teaches me; I believe it, because God has said it." If the temptation be something violent, let us not disturb ourselves so as to hesitate in the faith. Let us not be disturbed. Let us protest to the Lord that we will live and die in the sentiments of our faith, with the assistance of grace. Let us disown all doubt which might occur to our imagination, and which the devil might infuse into our minds. By this generous and sincere disavowal, faith will be preserved and confirmed in us, and will become as a saving shield against all the attacks of the enemies of salvation.

But Mary's faith gives us, in this regard, a very perfect model. It is, that we must, even at the risk of our goods, our fortune, our life itself, constantly persevere in the faith of our fathers, which we received in baptism. It is only at that price that our faith will merit to be crowned in heaven. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father in heaven." Faith, humble, mild, gentle, and inflexible, let such be our sentiments during life. They will be our consolation at death.

ON THE HOPE OF MARY.

"I am the Mother of fair Hope."--*Eccclus.*, chap. xxiv.

HOPE is a supernatural virtue which imbues the heart of the Christian man, and by which, relying upon the assistance of heaven, he hopes, by means of his good works, to obtain eternal life. Hope, to be a truly

Christian virtue, must be firm and unshaken. Nevertheless, that hope excludes neither fear nor uncertainty as to our salvation; but it is certain that the greater and more perfect hope is, the more do doubt and fear diminish, and that it is which forms confidence. Now, as it is by liveliness of faith, by purity of morals, by the aid of God's grace, that hope grows into confidence, what must have been the Blessed Virgin's hope, and on how many occasions had she need of throwing herself into the bosom of that firm confidence in God? She saw Saint Joseph so disturbed, and intending to leave her for want of knowing the ineffable mystery which was wrought in her by the power of the Most High. Mary, full of confidence, leaves all in the hands of the Lord, assured that all would redound to his glory, as it actually did. We learn from this example, that whatever affliction may befall us, in whatever danger we may find ourselves, we must hope that God will sustain and console us, and conduct us to a happy end. God has promised to hear the prayer of the just.

We often ask of God, we hope in God, and yet do not obtain that which we ask. That is because all the virtues have their trials: hope has hers. Abraham hoped, according to the divine promise, that from his son Isaac should descend the chosen nation. He receives the order to sacrifice that son of benediction, yet nevertheless perseveres in his hope. He firmly believes that, by means unknown to him, God will fulfil his promise. It is to that firm and constant hope that the example of the Blessed Virgin engages us; she constantly hoped that her son would save mankind, and should one day reign over heaven and earth. She sees that adorable Son delivered over to the fury of the executioners, to the hor-

rors of torment and death; yet she still firmly hopes that Jesus Christ, whom she sees die in ignominy, will rise again, as he had announced, covered with glory, and that he will subject the whole world to his gospel and his empire.

That firm and generous hope is the rule we ought to follow in all the tribulations of life, however great, however sensible they may be. It is especially necessary to us in the exercise of prayer and in the practices of religion. It often happens that, after having begun to serve God devoutly, after having tasted the sweetness of his holy service, we come to fall into a state of dryness, bitterness, and desolation. We believe that God has departed from us in those times of storm and trial; far, then, from allowing ourselves to be overcome, we should sustain ourselves with hope, the foundation of which—that is to say, the bounty of God and the merits of Jesus Christ—subsists always. We should persevere in the practice of good works, prayer, and penance. It is not a sensible fervor, it is a tried virtue, that gains the heart of God, by a perfect resignation to his holy will. “Though all the powers of hell were leagued against me,” said the Royal Prophet David, “I would still hope in the Lord my God.” The Wise Man calls on the whole universe to give testimony of this truth. “My children,” says he, “question all men living on the earth, ask them what has been their experience; they will all tell you, by the mouth of David, that never has any one been disappointed who had placed their confidence in God. In thee, O Lord, have I hoped. I shall not be eternally confounded! Nevertheless, this hope should be supported by good works, otherwise it would be presumption. Let us imitate Mary, whose firm faith and

lively hope were always animated by the practise of works of salvation and of sanctification. Let us invoke her in our troubles, let us imitate her in her example, hoping for all graces through her intercession.

ON THE HOLY VIRGIN'S ARDENT LOVE OF GOD.

"I languish with love."—*Canticles*, chap. v.

It may be said that all the affections of Mary's heart were ineffable; but her love for God was infinitely above all others. Let us penetrate, if we can, into that living sanctuary of charity, the heart of Mary. Let us say: "The more a soul knows God, his goodness, his beauty, his adorable perfections, and the more it loves him, if it be generous and grateful. Now, there never was any one on earth who had a more perfect knowledge of God than Mary; never did any one receive from God more graces and favors, and never had any one more fidelity and gratitude to God than she. What, then, was the measure of her love for him? It was a measureless, boundless love. Oh! with what ardent charity were the mind and heart of Mary penetrated! How many rays of divine love enlightened her! How many flames of that love glowed in all her senses! What tender aspirations! What sweet tears! What ecstasies! What transports, thinking of the object of that holy love! And when did she not think of him? She had unceasingly in her mouth and in her heart those words and sentiments of the spouse in the *Canticles*, "My beloved to me, and I to him."

Mary expressed that ardent love in her divine canticle, where we see her transported with a holy joy, celebrat-

ing the praises of her beloved: rejoicing, she glorifies him: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." From that love proceeded the most exact observance, not only of all the precepts, but even of the least counsels, so that she never committed the slightest fault. From that love sprang the perfection of good works: it was in love that they were done. It is love which gives a pure intention to please God alone; it is love that makes the will always tend towards God with promptitude and fervor. From that love sprang the most enduring patience in all kinds of trials and sufferings. When we love, we willingly suffer for the object of our love. In fine, the heart of Mary—prefigured by the bush which burned without being consumed, and by the propitiatory altar whereon the fire was never extinguished either by day or by night,—was as a fiery furnace where the flames, being continually fed, unceasingly acquired new degrees of heat. Sleep itself did not interrupt her love for God. She said, with much more reason than the spouse of the Canticles could say, I sleep, and my heart watcheth. The ordinary actions of her life did not prevent her from loving, and her love for God did not prevent her from applying herself to the occupations of human life. She loved God always; and at every moment of her life, she did only what she thought was most agreeable to God. In short, it is impossible that a pure creature can love God more on earth; even the highest seraphim in heaven might descend into the heart of Mary to learn to love God. Such is the reflection of Saint Jerome.

The principal thing that we should imitate in Mary is her love for God. Divine love is the noblest exercise of all virtues; it is their soul, their perfection, their com-

pletion. Let us, then, give our whole heart to God, desiring nothing, seeking nothing but himself, or what leads to him, to the end that that love may become the principle and the governing motive of our conduct. Let us continually ask it of the Lord; let us often represent to ourselves his greatness and his infinite perfections; let us call to mind the numberless benefits which he has bestowed upon us; let us exercise ourselves in that holy love by the faithful observance of the divine precepts, by horror and avoidance of all mortal sin; let us even, as far as possible, avoid even venial offences.

Let us also exercise ourselves in perfect charity towards God, by directing all our works with the pure intention of pleasing him in all; let us act with exactitude, with care, and with zeal; let us bring to our every action as much forethought as though it were to be the last of our life; let us imitate the fervor with which Mary did all for her God; let us be penetrated with the application of her mind and the affection of her heart; let us join in the intimate and continual union she had with God; let us, like her, desire ardently to do, to suffer, and to sacrifice all for the love of God. Let us often invoke Mary in her quality of sweet and amiable Mother of holy love. Finally, let us beg from her the grace to love God during our life, and to unite forever with the saints to love him more perfectly in heaven.

ON THE CHARITY OF MARY TOWARDS MEN.

"(Mary) so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son."—*Saint John*, chap. iii.

THE habit of charity which God gives our souls, in order that we may love him, is the same as that which engages us to love our neighbor; so that the more the former love is towards God, the greater is the second in regard to our neighbor. The true love of our neighbor is where we love him for God's sake, as his creature, formed to his image, and redeemed with his blood. St. Paul says, that he who loves his neighbor fulfils the whole law. Such was the love whereof the saints have given such great examples. Their ardent love of God was always accompanied by a sincere love of their neighbor. They often manifested that love by the sacrifice of their fortune, their possessions, their life, their blood. But that love, great though it was, was it ever comparable to the immense charity of Mary for mankind? She exercised that charity as long as she lived on earth. Independently of that charitable feeling which led her to assist the needy, even without their asking her help; of that which she felt when she asked her divine Son, at the wedding of Cana, to perform a miracle, representing to him the affliction of the family who had invited them, and whose wine had failed; of that which made her undertake the visit to Saint Elizabeth, to whose house she repaired only through charity;—what a proof of her love for us did not Mary give in consenting to become the Mother of a Saviour-God! She thenceforward engaged to make the sacrifice of that beloved Son, and to see him immolated for the salvation of men! By that generous

consent, she participated, to the fullest extent of her ability, in the redemption.

People often flatter themselves that they have charity for their neighbor when they wish him no ill. Defective charity! To fulfil the obligation of the precept of charity towards our brethren, we must not only wish them no ill, but, as far as we can, procure them good; we must be disposed to compassionate their sufferings, to relieve them in their necessities, to console them in their afflictions, and, under certain circumstances, to sacrifice ourselves for them.

One of the great proofs of charity is to do good to those who hate and persecute us—that is to say, to love our enemies for God and with a view to God. Mary has set us the example of that heroic charity: there can be no greater enemies to a mother than those who put her son to death. Now, Mary at the foot of the cross saw hers armed against her divine Son, their hands stained with his blood, their hearts filled with rage and fury against him: that divine Mother, entering into the views of God and submitting to the decree of his justice, prayed and interceded for them; following the example of her adorable Son, she solicited, from God the Father, conversion, pardon, and grace for them, saying with Jesus Christ himself, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” Alas! we find it so difficult to pardon the slightest offence! We carry in our hearts rancor, animosity, and inveterate dislike; it is often only time alone that effaces that remembrance, when oblivion takes the place of charity; and yet we are Christians, we are the children of a God immolated for us through love of our salvation!

Divine Mother! When thou wert at the foot of the cross, Jesus Christ appointed thee Mother of all Chris-

tians, and recommended us all to thee in a special manner, in the person of his beloved disciple. Oh, but that divine adoption should unite us closely to each other in the bowels of thy maternal charity! A tender Mother interests herself in the welfare of her children; deign to interest thyself for us, and to obtain for us all a sincere universal, efficacious charity, so that we may all have but one heart and one soul in the admirable heart of thy divine Son and thine !

ON THE PIETY OF MARY.

"She departed not from the Temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day."—*Saint Luke*, chap. ii.

FROM charity, as from their source, spring piety and devotion—that is to say, the prompt and fervent will for all that regards the service of God and the exercises of religion.

The parents of Mary, even before she was conceived, had devoted her to God, promising him that if he gave them offspring they would consecrate it to his service in the Temple. When she was three years old, they joyfully brought her to the temple of the Lord, in fulfilment of their promise. In the Temple there was a retired place, where a great number of virgins employed themselves holily in works proper for their sex, and in practices of piety befitting their condition. Such were the exercises of the early youth of Mary while she remained in the Temple.

Work, prayer, the reading of the holy books, occupied her time; she adored the Lord in spirit and in truth; she praised and glorified him with sentiments of the most

profound respect; instructed and enlightened by the Spirit of God, she contemplated his infinite perfections, and adored his greatness: the labor of her hands did not interrupt her communion with her God. Every day, every hour, every moment beheld her growing in wisdom as in age; she shunned, as far as was in her power, all occasions of laughing, talking, amusing herself with her companions, in order that she might give herself entirely to God in the privacy of meditation and retirement. When she left the Temple, she departed not from her plan of conduct or from her constant union with God.

But after the angel's announcement of the great mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word, the piety of Mary acquired new degrees of perfection; her recollection became more profound, her prayer more frequent, her celestial illuminations and consolations loftier and more sublime; she was concentrated, and as it were annihilated within herself; and while she bore the Word in her womb, she admired the infinite charity of God for men. Astonished afterwards when she saw a God become a child, the Almighty become weak, passible, subject to pain and destined to death, Mary devoted herself during the whole life of the Man-God to a continual exercise of piety, of suffering, of sacrifice, and of love; at his death she would have expired with grief at the foot of the cross if a superior strength had not sustained her.

After the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, the piety of the Blessed Virgin, already so perfect, received a new increase from the gifts of the Holy Ghost which were communicated to her in all their abundance, in all their plenitude. Saint Joseph was already dead, our Saviour was in the realms of bliss; and Mary, the spouse

of one, the mother of the other, although still a virgin, found herself a widow, that she might serve as a model in all states of life—that is to say, to teach virgins the love they should have for virginity, and the care with which they should preserve that precious treasure; to married women, the obedience and respect due to their husbands; to widows, the spirit of recollection, retirement, and prayer; to all, in a word, the holy and abundant practice of the duties of their state, in which true, solid, and sincere piety consists. For, be it well understood, that true devotion does not consist in feeling in the soul a certain consolation, a certain relish, and a certain attraction; essential devotion consists in a will generously determined to do good, prompt to tend to the things of God, faithful to practise the virtues proper to one's state. It is to that solid piety that we ought to aspire, following the example of Mary, who will always and in every respect be for us the most perfect model.

The means of maintaining afterwards, preserving and increasing the spirit of piety, is the consideration of the things of God, the reading of good books, interior recollection, the practise of good works, the mortification of the senses—in a word, union with God.

Happy those who, like Mary, have given themselves to God at the beginning of their life; who have consecrated to him the first fruits and the flower of their age, who have never yielded their heart to the world and its vanities, who have early perceived the nothingness of all things earthly, and attached themselves to God alone. What peace will they not enjoy during their life ! what sweet consolation will they not have at the hour of death !

ON THE OBEDIENCE OF MARY.

“Be it done unto me according to thy word.”—*St. Luke*, chap. i.

THROUGH pride and self-love we have a natural repugnance to obey others. Thus, a prompt, unreserved obedience rendered to men, with a view to God, is the least equivocal proof of a heart entirely submissive to the divine will. The most perfect model of that virtue, after Jesus Christ, is the Blessed Virgin. From her earliest childhood she showed herself obedient to the will of St. Joachim and St. Anne, her parents; regarding in them the person of God, attentive to their words, their looks, their intentions, she obeyed them punctually without ever doing even the slightest thing against their will; retired in the Temple, she observed with the greatest exactitude all that was ordered by the High Priest; and after her marriage with St. Joseph, though her dignity placed her far above that patriarch, she was subject to him, because she knew that such was the order established by God. The Queen of heaven, the Mother of a God, obeying a simple artisan! What a spectacle for heaven! what an example for us!

It is, doubtless, a virtue to obey wise, moderate, virtuous men when God confers dignity upon them; “but it is a far higher degree of obedience,” says St. Bonaventure, “to obey superiors who are imperious, harsh, and whimsical—who, without reason and without consideration, command painful things. It is of that obedience that Saint Peter speaks when he says: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” As it, therefore, requires much more virtue to submit willingly, so

much more merit is acquired. It was thus that the Blessed Virgin obeyed the edict of Augustus; she leaves her dwelling at Nazareth, and although on the point of giving birth to her divine Son, she repairs with great fatigue to Bethlehem, in obedience to the orders of the emperor. Touching example of the obedience due to sovereigns, whatsoever they may be, when they issue their commands !

The great mystery of the Purification of Mary presents us with yet another very perfect example of this obedience. The terms of the law excepted the Blessed Virgin from the obligation common to all women; but that privilege she converted into a duty of edification, to teach us to respect the divine law, not only observing the rigor of the precepts, but embracing even the perfection of the counsels.

Obedience is practised in all states: children are to obey their parents, the wife her husband, the servant his master, the subject his prince, each individual him whom he has chosen for his guide in the way of salvation. The same virtue which makes us obey should also induce us to obey our superiors with a view to God; the power they have to command us they hold from God, whose place they occupy; to obey them, therefore, is to obey God himself.

Obedience procures us inestimable advantages; it protects us from the illusions of self-love, from the errors to which the human mind is ever prone, from the snares which the demon unceasingly sets for piety, from the doubts and perplexities to which one is often exposed when guided by himself. From perfect obedience spring peace and tranquillity of soul. "Our own will," says Saint Bernard, "is the cause of all our troubles, of all

our agitation, of our internal conflicts, of all our sins, and of all our disorders; were there no self-will," he adds, "there would be no hell." Obedience is the remedy for all the evils caused by that self-will; it mortifies, subdues, and takes it captive. Obedience is, in the sight of God, of such great merit that it equals in some degree the merit of the martyrs; such is the idea of the pious author of the "Imitation of Christ;" and this it was that rendered that virtue so dear, so sacred to the Blessed Virgin during her entire life; and in all circumstances she had engraved on her heart that perfect sentiment of submission and dependence which she manifested to the angel who announced the design of God concerning her, "Be it done unto me according to thy word!" Let us imitate so great an example, and remember always that the obedient man, far more than the conqueror, gains glorious victories.

ON THE PURITY OF MARY.

"Let my heart be undefiled in thy justifications."—*Ps. cxviii.*

MARY, from her tenderest youth, gave all her thoughts and all her feelings to the entire consecration of her body and her soul to the Lord, by a perpetual virginity. She fully understood, that the more perfect that virtue was in her, the more she would resemble her God, who is essentially pure. That sacrifice was so much the more generous in her, that barren women were objects of reproach amongst the Jews. Mary regarded as nothing the opprobrium attached to the state of which she made choice. Satisfied with rendering herself acceptable in the eyes of her God, she placed herself above

human ideas. So, when the angel came to announce to her that she should be the Mother of the Most High, she did not accept that supreme dignity without being assured that the Divine Maternity would not infringe on her vow. What heroic virtue! To prefer the glory of a spotless virginity to the glory of becoming Mother of God, Queen of heaven, Sovereign of the universe! "O magnanimous heart!" exclaims Saint Bernard, "heart firmer than the earth, loftier than the heavens! but that all ages may know how faithful God is in rewarding those who serve him, Mary will be at once virginal and fruitful; she shall be blessed amongst all women, and blessed forever shall be the chaste fruit of her womb."

God had two objects in view in inspiring Mary to make the vow of perpetual virginity. It was his will that the Blessed Virgin should serve him with all the perfection of which she was capable; and then, that his Mother should give to the Church the accomplished model of a spotless purity. It was his will, moreover, that Mary should be the first to present to mankind that great example which was to give the world so many faithful imitators. The Church of Christ, spread throughout the universe, soon saw herself adorned with the shining virtues of continence and virginity, in so many persons of both sexes who lived here below like angels in heaven. Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Chrysostom, etc., have left us admirable pictures of all the countries of the globe where chastity and virginity prevailed. In Asia, in Europe, in Africa, cities and deserts were filled with the faithful who represented upon earth the life of the blessed in the celestial abode. Now, it is to Mary that we are indebted for that prodigy. She first gave to the world the example of a perpetual vir-

ginity, that is to say, of a virtue till then unknown; a virtue which forms the ornament and glory of the Church.

God decrees that we shall be holy like himself. It is especially by purity that we shall be able, by means of grace, to have that holy resemblance to God. It is by imitating, as far as we can, the great example that Mary has given us in that admirable virtue. We shall imitate her by an extreme attention to avoid all that can wound it, by a prompt and generous resistance to every thought, every feeling, every word, and every look, that is contrary thereto; by a continual mortification of our senses and our passions; by constant assiduity to prayer, by a holy distrust of ourselves, by a continual avoidance of all the occasions, of all the dangers to which that virtue might be exposed. In a word, by a great esteem, a great love for a virtue so sublime, which renders us pleasing to God, dear to the Mother of God, raised, in a manner, to the state of the angels of God.

ON MARY'S LOVE OF SECLUSION.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord."—*Ps. lxxxiii.*

ALTHOUGH a superabundant grace, and the special assistance of God, shielded the Blessed Virgin from all danger of sin, she nevertheless lived a most retired life, appearing in public only through absolute necessity, when the glory of God or the salvation of her neighbor required it. Beyond that, shunning all connection with the contagious world, she kept herself in the strict retirement which was ever most dear and precious to her.

Thus, when the angel came to announce to her the great mystery of the Redemption, he found her alone in a retired place, and in the spirit of prayer before God.

This spirit of retirement, which we admire in Mary, is necessary to all Christians, according to their state, for the preservation of the precious treasure of grace; but it more especially befits women, and still more virgins not to appear in public except where necessity or decorum requires them to do so. The curiosity and levity of Dinah, daughter of Jacob, became fatal to her. She went out of her father's house to see the women of Sichem, and had cause to repent having done so. Her own dishonor, the crime of her brothers, and the massacre of the inhabitants, were the fatal consequences. We cannot always separate ourselves entirely from intercourse with the world; but, then, although the body be engaged in scenes of gayety or dissipation, the mind should be recollected, it should keep watch over the senses—especially the eyes, by which death enters into the soul; for even the slightest liberty allowed them, in regard to the objects which present themselves, may give rise to bad thoughts, criminal desires, and sometimes the loss of grace and the ruin of the soul.

The Holy Scripture furnishes us with two examples of this kind, which are calculated to inspire us with a holy vigilance over ourselves. The first is that of David, whom an imprudent glance plunged into the double crime of adultery and murder. The other is that of the holy man Job, who made an inviolable compact with his eyes, that they should never look upon any dangerous object. To have the heart pure, the eyes must be chaste and reserved.

It becomes both sexes, then, to forbid themselves, after

the example of Mary, as far as their state will permit, all dissipations, all conversation, company, plays, assemblies, where virtue would be endangered. The risk is here like that of a ship beaten by the winds, and surrounded by shoals. The vessel goes to pieces, and ends by being swallowed up if it remain exposed to the fury of the storm. In circumstances which expose virtue to danger, by conducting ourselves cautiously, and praying for God's assistance, we shall be strong against the danger, because God will sustain us. But if we needlessly expose ourselves, by yielding to dissipation, and frequenting parties, companies, etc., there is reason to fear for our salvation; because God has not promised us his grace, when we voluntarily run the risk of losing it.

To this great reason we may add another, which the conduct of Mary suggests to us: it is, the obligation of giving good example to our neighbor. This is still more obligatory on pious persons than on others, because the malignant world has its eyes upon them, and is ever ready to put a bad construction even on their slightest actions, if they only seem to be imprudent. Following the salutary example which Mary gives us, let us love retirement, shun the contagion of the world, preserve ourselves in the secure retreat of recollection, and keep ourselves as much as possible in solitude. There it is that God will speak to our hearts, and make us hear the words of life.

ON THE MODESTY OF MARY.

"Let your modesty be known to all men."—*Phil.*, chap. iv. 5.

MODESTY is a virtue which regulates the whole exterior, and which comes from a well-governed interior.

The apparel, the laugh, the gait, says Holy Writ, announce the real nature of the man. His aspect indicates whether wisdom reigns in his heart. The exterior, if well regulated, is the dial-plate of the interior. It is a proof that the man has subdued his passions, and that all within is in order.

The Blessed Virgin was a perfect model of modesty and decorum. Her external senses were all under the control of her reason; her whole demeanor was grave and decent. "Her modesty," says Saint Epiphanius, "appeared to judicious men a prodigy, which caused them to say that nothing like it had ever been seen. Every thing in Mary appeared superhuman and celestial; and from that it was understood that the Creator of heaven and earth was preparing her for something great, by making of her the most accomplished of all creatures."

Who can express the modesty, the propriety, the maidenly reserve, which the Blessed Virgin exhibited in her bearing, in her discourse, in her sentiments, in her whole conduct? All the virtues concurred in giving her absolute dominion over herself. Happy for us, if, following her example, we made all the virtues reign in ourselves!

Modesty requires that the tongue should be so governed, that, when we speak, every word appears to be dictated by prudence.

Wisdom requires that we should await the occasion and the moment when we ought to speak. The inconsiderate man speaks at random, without caution and without judgment. Prudence warns us that we should not be diffuse in words, and that he who speaks much, seldom speaks well.

Humility requires that we seldom speak of ourselves,

whether in praise or blame; for, in false humility, self-love hides or betrays its pride.

Charity forbids every word that might wound our neighbor; a word often causes irreparable misfortunes.

Modesty is the ornament of all virtues; it gives them a new merit, and a new brilliancy. The want of modesty, on the contrary, weakens all the virtues, and changes them, so to say, into vices.

That amiable and celestial virtue shone in Mary, who furnished the most perfect example of it. She always loved silence, so that she might commune alone with her God. Nevertheless, that silence, which was so dear to her, she interrupted as soon as an opportunity offered, to glorify God or serve her neighbor. Saint John Damascene says, that "all the words which proceeded from her mouth expressed the modesty, the sweetness, the charity, the humility, with which her soul was replete."

To preserve ourselves in the practice of this holy modesty, let us consider that we are constantly under the eyes of God; that we have our guardian angel forever at our side, witnessing all our actions; that, as Christians, all our discourses, our steps, our gestures, should be regulated by the law of God. For that we have only to imitate the Blessed Virgin, after Jesus Christ, our great model. Then, our whole exterior, regulated by interior principles, will redound to the glory of God, the edification of our neighbor, and our own advantage.

ON MARY'S LOVE FOR POVERTY.

"If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and come and follow me."—*Saint Matthew*, chap. xix.

THE whole life of Mary was one continual exercise of voluntary poverty. When, according to the designs of the Eternal, she thought of changing her state of life, she married a just man,—of the blood of David, it is true, but so poor that he lived by the labor of his hands. To what extent did she not practise that poverty, in the mystery of her childbirth! She sets out from Nazareth, with Saint Joseph, in order to obey the edict of Augustus. On what did she subsist by the way? Arrived at Bethlehem, in the depth of winter, where did she lodge? All the lodgings are occupied by the rich. Mary and Joseph are poor: they appear so, and are everywhere rejected. A stable, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, meets their view: they take refuge in it. There it is that the Queen of angels brings into the world the Son of the Most High. She wraps him in swaddling clothes, and the breath of two beasts of burden is the only resource from the bitter cold of winter. What must not the heart of that tender Mother have suffered!

There is still another trait of evangelical poverty in Mary. The offering she presented in the Temple, forty days after her delivery, was a dove or pigeon—that was the offering of the poor. No doubt the gold that Mary had received from the three Magi would have enabled her to make a more considerable offering; "but that gift," says Saint Bonaventure, "had already passed from her hands into those of the poor, whose miseries she compassionated, as she shared them herself."

In the flight into Egypt she had a new exercise of poverty. What trials had not the Holy Family to encounter, during their stay in that strange land! Foreigners, unknown, in want of every thing, what must they not have suffered! But in what state, and in what feelings, did they not offer their sufferings to God! Thus passed their years, after their return—ever poor, ever suffering, and ever resigned.

When the Saviour had quitted the earth to ascend into heaven, Mary continued to live in poverty as before. Jesus, when dying, had recommended her to his beloved disciple, who was poor,—having, like the other apostles, left all, to follow the way of the cross. Finally, it is certain that, as long as Mary lived, after the ascension, she was a living example of all virtues; but especially a perfect model of evangelical poverty. She was born poor, she lived poor, and it was in poverty that she wished to breathe her last sigh.

Why did the Saviour of the world so emphatically recommend the spirit of poverty to all his children? It was in order that, being disengaged from temporal ties, and having no more earthly affections, they might the more easily apply themselves to the things of heaven; it was, to withdraw them from the criminal abuse so often made of wealth; it was in order that they might more purely love God, whose love increases in the soul according as it is more void of all earthly affection;—in a word, that they might be more conformable to the model of the Saviour, who, during his life, had not whereon to lay his head. Such are the views that God proposed to himself, and which Mary so perfectly fulfilled.

Every one, according to their state, must imitate the

poverty of Mary, and of her divine Son. Those who possess temporal goods, should possess them as though they possessed them not—that is to say, being detached from them in heart and mind, and using them in conformity with the maxims of the Gospel; pouring them into the hands of the poor, relieving the suffering members of Christ; in a word, consecrating them by a holy use.

Detachment from riches is recognized by these marks: If, to acquire them, to preserve them, to increase them, illicit means are never adopted; if, when they are lost by untoward accidents, we resign ourselves to the will of God; if their possession does not unduly occupy the mind and the heart, and become not an obstacle to the service of God, and the acquisition of the eternal blessings. Finally, if we employ them not in vanities, in superfluities, in profane uses, but in alms-giving, in good works, in the wants of our state, and according to our state, then those riches, so often pernicious, turn to the profit of salvation.

Happy are those whom God calls to a real and absolute despoilment of all, to have thenceforward in this world no other thought, no other desire, no other wealth than the thought and desire of the solid and eternal goods. O poor Virgin! model of voluntary poverty, obtain for us that spirit of poverty which is preferable to all riches.

MARY'S PATIENCE IN SUFFERINGS.

"Patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise."—*Heb.*, chap. xxxvi.

"PATIENCE," says Saint Augustine, "is a virtue which enables us to bear in peace the evils of this life, whatso-

ever they may be, persecutions, insults, the loss of health, infirmities, diseases, death itself."

Patience has different degrees, more perfect one than the other. The first is to bear trials with resignation, in our quality of Christians and sinners. The second is, to receive them willingly, as coming from the hand of God, who permits all for our good. The third is, to desire them ardently, that we may have a holy conformity with Jesus Christ, the model of the elect, in his quality of "Man of sorrow."

It is of this virtue, of perfect patience, that the Blessed Virgin has given us the most touching, the most consoling, and the most continued examples, during the course of her mortal life, even to the moment of her glorious assumption into heaven. Although the Gospel does not recount to us all the pains that she endured from her early age to the incarnation of the Saviour, there can be no doubt that they were exceedingly great. Sufferings have ever been the lot of souls dear to God; would he have withheld them from her whom he had chosen for his Mother? She was favored with them beyond all the martyrs, and her life was nothing else than one continued martyrdom. Let us follow it step by step.

What grief was hers, when Saint Joseph, that wise and faithful guardian of her virginity, was on the point of abandoning her, and exiling himself from his native land! What grief to see her beloved Son born in a stable, in the depth of winter, and enduring all the rigor of the season! Mary bore her own sufferings with joy; but what affliction it was for that maternal heart to see her Son lying on a little straw, having no other means of warming him than to press him to her sorrow-laden heart! How grievously must not the sensibility of that

worthy Mother have been tried when the knife of circumcision drew forth the blood of that beloved Son, in the afflicting ceremony which already announced to Mary that Jesus was one day to shed his last drop of blood upon the cross ! What fatigue, what anxiety, did not Mary suffer going to seek an asylum in Egypt, where she remained so long amongst strange and idolatrous people ! What must have been her tears, when informed of the cruel rage of Herod, and the massacre of so many children, innocent victims immolated on account of her Son !

During the three years that the Saviour preached and announced the Gospel, Mary had great trouble and fatigue to undergo, following him in his journeys, not with the distinction and authority of a mother, but with the humblest attention to the divine word, that she might profit by it. With what feelings must she have heard the imprecations, the accusations, the blasphemies vomited against Jesus Christ by the jealous Scribes and the envious Pharisees, concocting vile plots for his destruction ! The time of his sacrifice approached, and Mary saw it arrive with the agony of grief which she alone could feel, which she alone could endure.

If the Passion made Jesus a man of sorrow, it made the heart of Mary an immense ocean of bitterness. What a situation for Mary when she saw her divine Son, the tender and only object of her delight, delivered over to the power of the Prince of Darkness ; then surrounded by armed men, bound, jostled, buffeted by an insolent soldiery, led in a mockery of triumph through all the streets of Jerusalem, dragged from tribunal to tribunal, before judges who were all prejudiced against him, greeted everywhere with the hootings, the clamor, and

the imprecations of a whole infuriated populace! Oh! heart of a mother, and of the tenderest of mothers! here it is, that we may apply to you the words of the Prophet, *Magna est velut mare contritio tua!* "The waves of affliction have flowed over thy heart, and made it an immense ocean of grief and bitterness."

Let us follow Jesus to Calvary; let us follow Mary to the foot of the cross; behold her as it were dying, as she raises her eyes to her expiring Son! Let us cease to speak; let us make our tears, our sighs, our sobs speak; let us unite them to the tears, the sighs, the sobs of Mary. But what do I say? Could she weep? Ordinary grief finds vent, and exhausts itself in cries and tears. Great grief is dumb; the tortured heart leaves the eye dry and the tongue paralyzed. Mary, mute at the foot of the cross, endured in that one moment grief more vivid, torments more violent, a martyrdom more cruel, than that of all the martyrs together.

Christians, children of the cross, children of her who is pre-eminently the Mother of sorrow, do you complain of your crosses and your sufferings in presence of the sufferings of a God and the Mother of a God—and those sufferings endured for you and your salvation!

Sinners, come and behold the tortures of the double victim which your sins have immolated! Just souls, come and pour your afflicted heart into the heart of your dying Father! Afflicted souls, come and seek consolation in the desolate soul of your tender Mother!

The last grief of Mary, the sword which most keenly pierced her heart, were the words of her Son in his last agony. "Woman," said he, pointing to Saint John, "behold thy son; and thou, son, behold thy mother!" So torn was Mary's heart at that moment that, without

a special assistance from on high, she would have expired. Her life was thenceforward only a continual martyrdom; the blood shed by her Son was ever before her eyes; the image of his Passion ever engraved in her heart. Grief had prepared and sanctified that innocent victim; divine love came at length to immolate her, and God the remunerator transported her to heaven, there to be forever our Queen, our Mother, our Mediatrix, our Advocate, and, after him, our all. Let us love her, honor her, invoke her, in her sufferings and in her virtues, that we may hereafter have a share in her glory and her happiness.

ON THE DEVOTION OF THE MONTH OF MARY; OR,
THE MONTH OF MAY.

"Stay me up with flowers."—*Cant.*, chap. ii.

THE devotion of the Month of Mary, or the Month of May, originated in Italy, towards the middle of the last century. It was Father Lalomia, a missionary, who first composed, in Italian, a little book on this devotion, entitled "The Month of Mary; or, the Month of May," the first translation of which into French appeared under the auspices of Madame Louise of France, prioress of the Carmelites of Saint Denis. The same sentiment which induced the servants of Mary to consecrate to her one day in every week, and to honor her three times a day, also inspired them with the idea of consecrating to her an entire month. "And in making an offering," says the Abbé le Tourneur, in his very interesting *New Month of Mary*, "we should always select that which is best and most agreeable: the month of May has been chosen as the fairest of all the year."

Pope Pius VII., instructed by the signal graces and favors that God bestowed upon all those who practised the devotion of the Month of Mary, granted, by a brief of the 21st March, 1815, to all the faithful who, in public or in private, during the month of May, should honor, by homage, prayers, and other acts of virtue, the Blessed Virgin on each day of the month, an indulgence of three hundred days; and once in the month a plenary indulgence, on the day when, having confessed and received communion, they should pray for the wants of the Church, and according to the pious intentions of his Holiness. Those indulgences are applicable to the souls in purgatory.

The practice of the Month of Mary is so agreeable to God, that, wherever it is observed, souls are restored to grace, piety flourishes anew, and a sensible revival of faith attests, every year, the power of her who has never been invoked in vain. Every one knows that, to perform the exercises during the month of Mary, it is good to be in a chapel of the Blessed Virgin, or before one of her images, adorned with flowers, and there to honor the Mother of God every day by holy reading, pious meditations, &c., each according to their devotion.

Subjoined are thirty-one daily exercises, selected from the "Year of Mary," and considered the best adapted to make that holy time profitable.

The devotion of the month of Mary may also be employed very usefully at any other time of the year, especially when any important favor is solicited by means of the Blessed Virgin, and it is then as a course of three novenas.

The daily exercise will be commenced with the consecration to the Blessed Virgin; then the Litany of the

Sacred Heart of Mary is to be recited; and the devotion ends with Saint Bernard's prayer, the *Memorare*: remembering, during the devotion of all these pious practices, which may be omitted without sin, but which, faithfully followed, will draw down abundant blessings—remembering, I say, that the best way to honor the Queen of heaven is to imitate her virtues.

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ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(By St. Francis de Sales.)

I SALUTE thee, most sweet Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and choose thee for my most dear Mother. I entreat thee to accept me for thy son and servant; I want no other mother and mistress than thee. I pray thee, then, my good, gracious, and sweet Mother, that thou wilt deign to remember that I am thy son; that thou art most powerful, and that I am a poor, weak, vile creature. I also entreat thee, most sweet and dear Mother, to govern and defend me in all my actions; for, alas! I am a poor and needy mendicant sorely in need of thy holy aid and protection. Well, then, most holy Virgin, my sweet Mother, in pity make me a sharer in thy graces and virtues, and especially in thy-holy humility, thine excellent purity, and fervent charity; but grant me above all—*[here mention the special favor that you solicit during this devotion.]* Tell me not, gracious Virgin, that thou canst not, for thy beloved Son has given thee all power, in heaven as well as on earth. Neither allege that thou shouldst not, for thou art the common Mother of all the poor children of Adam, and mine especially. Since, then, most holy Virgin, thou art my Mother and all-powerful, how canst thou refuse to lend me thine aid? Behold, my Mother, and consider if thou art not obliged to grant me what I ask, and to have compassion on my misery. Be thou exalted, therefore, under heaven, and by thine intercession obtain for me all the gifts and graces which it may please the most holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the object of all my love, alike in time and in the great eternity, to bestow. Amen.

LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY.

Lord, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, *hear us.*

Jesus, *graciously hear us.*

God the Father, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Ghost, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us.*

Immaculate heart of Mary, *pray for us.*

Heart full of grace,

Heart blessed among all hearts,

Heart of Mary, delight of the Father,

Heart of Mary, object of the Son's most tender delight,

Heart of Mary, most agreeable dwelling of the Holy Ghost,

Heart of Mary, enriched by the three divine persons with all celestial gifts,

Heart of Mary, mirror of the divine perfections,

Heart of Mary, seat of wisdom,

Heart of Mary, furnace of divine love,

Heart of Mary, centre of fair delight,

Heart of Mary, treasure of all holiness,

Heart of Mary, in all things like to the heart of Jesus,

Heart of Mary, sweetest and humblest of all hearts,

Heart of Mary, most conformable to the divine will,

Heart of Mary, model of all virtues,

Heart of Mary, pierced by a sword of grief,

Heart of Mary, first consecrated by the vow of virginity,

Heart of Mary, which supplied the adorable blood that redeemed the world,

Heart of Mary, which obtains for sinners the graces of conversion and salvation,

Heart of Mary, carefully preserving the words of Jesus Christ,

Heart of Mary, the noblest, the holiest, the greatest, and the most amiable of all hearts,

Heart of Mary, worthy of the love and veneration of heaven and earth,

Heart of Mary, our refuge, our help, and our consolation,

Heart of Mary, sweet hope of all who honor thee,

Pray for us.

V. Immaculate Mary, by the sweetness and humility of thy heart,

R. Render our hearts conformable to the heart of Jesus.

PRAYER.

O God Almighty, whose clemency is infinite, who, for the salvation of sinners and the consolation of the wretched, hast rendered the heart of Mary like to that of Jesus her Son, in meekness and in mercy, grant unto those who honor that immaculate heart the grace of becoming, by its merits, men according to the heart of Jesus, who, with thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, liveth forever and ever! Amen.

[The exercise is terminated by the following prayer, to which Pope Pius VII. has attached many indulgences.]

MIRACULOUS MEMORARE.

(By Saint Bernard.)

[It is related of Father Bernard, surnamed the Poor Priest, that he distributed during his life more than twelve hundred thousand copies of this prayer, and by that means had the happiness of obtaining a thousand miraculous things.]

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, and sought thine intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To thee I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. [*Here make your request.*] O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me! Amen.

ON THE DEVOTION OF THE FIFTEEN SATURDAYS OF MARY,

IN HONOR OF THE FIFTEEN MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY.

"Sanctify my Sabbaths, that they may be a sign between me and you."—*Ezekiel*, chap. xx.

THIS pious practice consists in receiving Holy Communion for fifteen successive Saturdays, in honor of the fifteen mysteries, and at the altar of the Rosary. If, however, this cannot be done on the Saturday, or in the chapel of the Rosary, it will suffice to go to communion on Sundays or other days of the week, and in the church most convenient.

The first of these communions will be made in honor of the first mystery, the second in honor of the second, and so on with the others.

During those days it is requisite:

1st, To take some time to consider, with respect and attention, the mystery in honor of which we are to receive communion.

2d, To thank God for the favors he has done us in that mystery.

3d, To pray him, by the merits of Jesus Christ, to hear us and have mercy on us.

4th, To implore the aid and intercession of the Blessed Virgin to obtain the particular favor that we ask.

We should also, as far as is in our power, practise some acts of piety and charity on the days on which we make those communions: for instance, recite the Rosary, or at least the beads; give some alms, if we can; visit the sick, and console the afflicted; distribute beads, pic-

tures, or books, if we have the means of doing so, in order to extend the devotion to Mary.

These fifteen communions are made when we seek to obtain from God, by the intercession of Mary, some great favor, spiritual or temporal.

Admirable effects have followed this devotion; miraculous favors have been conferred by God; gifts and graces of every kind he has vouchsafed to those who practised it. It contains, in fact, an efficacious means of obtaining all sorts of graces from the Lord.

1. Because God grants graces only through the merits of Jesus Christ, whose mysteries are honored in the Rosary.

2. Because the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist sheds graces in abundance.

3. Because no intercession can be more powerful with Jesus Christ than that of Mary.

On each communion day an exercise may be read from the "Year of Mary," applicable to the mystery in honor of which the communion is made; or any other, according to the piety of each.

Priests who practise this devotion will say, on each day that they honor a mystery, the Mass proper to each of them—as that of the Annunciation for the first, that of the Visitation for the second.

For the five sorrowful mysteries it will suffice to say the Mass *de cruce, vel de Passione*.

SPECIAL NOVENA

IN HONOR OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY,

*To obtain by the invocation of that glorious title
some special grace or favor.*

NOTICE.*

Two extraordinary graces, one spiritual and the other temporal, having been recently obtained by means of this pious novena, still in manuscript, made in honor of Mary, CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN, before one of her images, after the model of the French medal styled "miraculous," the author, in publishing it, believes that he does a thing agreeable and at the same time useful to the devout clients of the Blessed Virgin, furnishing them with a new occasion to reanimate their confidence in the inexhaustible bounty of that Mother of mercy.

The special object of this novena being to honor the Immaculate Conception of Mary, it is, therefore, proper to make it before an image representing that mystery; for instance, that of the medal styled "miraculous" would be very suitable for that purpose.

It would, undoubtedly, be an excellent means of obtaining the greatest fruit from this Novena, if, before

* This notice stands at the head of the Novena, in Italian, entitled: Special Novena in honor of the Most Holy Mary, conceived without sin, to obtain, by means of her intercession, some peculiar grace; by a French Priest, devoted to the Blessed Virgin. Rome: Marini, printer, No. 4 Piazza del Collegio Romana. 1836.

ending it, we took care to confess and receive Holy Communion, preparing ourselves, from the first days, for those two actions so proper to merit for us the most signal effects of the protection of the Mother of God.

It will also be very advantageous to hear holy Mass, if we conveniently can, every day of the Novena, and to do some work of Christian charity, or practise some mortification in honor of Mary conceived without sin.

It is to be hoped that, by following this advice, Mary will hear the prayers addressed to her, celebrating for nine successive days the remembrance of a mystery which is so glorious to her, and that God will grant the graces asked of him in the name of his august Mother, conceived without sin.

FIRST DAY.

On this day, honor Mary, conceived without sin, as the most perfect of all creatures, and consecrate yourself to her.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, as no one can sufficiently appreciate thy dignity, so no one is capable of rendering thee the honor thou deservest. Alas! what can I then do, miserable sinner, to honor thee? Nevertheless, since thou dost not reject the homage of a heart filled with thy love, O sovereign mistress of the world, thou whose goodness and mercy equal thy power, deign to accept that which I owe thee on so many accounts. Prostrate at the foot of thy throne, Mother of my God and of my Redeemer, thou who reignest over all the seraphim, and in presence of whom the majesty of all the

kings of the earth is but a vain shadow, I offer thee the sincerest honor, the humblest and most profound homage, after that which I owe to my God.

With the greatest joy of my heart, I recognize thee as my sovereign mistress. I esteem myself happy in knowing thee, belonging to thee, serving thee; but as my lowliness prevents me from offering to thee any thing worthy of thee, I unite my homage with that of the whole celestial court, and with the honor thou hast received from Jesus Christ, thy Son. I consecrate myself to thee, august and holy Mary; receive me into the number of thy servants, and deign to assist me in accomplishing the duties which that title imposes upon me, duties of respect and obedience, with an ardent desire to sanctify myself for thine and thy Son's glory.

The Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, and following.

SECOND DAY.

On this day, honor Mary conceived without sin, as your divine Mother; and show, by your works, that you are her true child.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, being elevated as thou art above all the choirs of angels, how can I, vile and miserable sinner, dare to address thee by the title of Mother; yet thou art really so, and that by a solemn bequest of Jesus Christ, yielding his last sigh upon the cross. Thou didst then adopt all the faithful as thy children, in the person of Saint John. I will, therefore, call thee by that sweet name of Mother; and I am firmly

convinced that, however unworthy I may be of so great an honor, thou wilt deign to recognize me as thy child. Show, I beseech thee, that thou art my Mother. And if my prayer touch thee not, hear the voice of my adorable Saviour, who, in the midst of the most cruel sufferings, spoke to thee in my behalf, and forgetting himself, so to say, confides me to thee in those tender words, "Woman, behold thy son." Alas ! behold that son prostrate at thy feet. Unworthy as he is, do not refuse to recognize him as such; suffer him to present himself to thee invested with that glorious title which thy divine Son merited for him in choosing to be born of thee for the salvation of men. Implore him then thyself for me; give me to know the happiness I enjoy in having thee for my Mother; grant me the grace to live in a manner worthy of thy son, perfectly to fulfil my duties as a Christian, to avoid sin, which would render me unworthy of thy favors; to the end that I may one day participate in thy glory and thy felicity in heaven. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, and following.

THIRD DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as your advocate, and address yourself to her on all occasions.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, O Mother of holy love, our life, our sweetness, our hope ! It was not sufficient, then, that Jesus Christ should become my advocate with his Father, he would also have thee our advocate with him ! How dear, then, must my salvation be to his

heart, and how powerful must thy protection be with him! Nevertheless, to accomplish the great work of my sanctification, it is his will that, with his infinite merits, I should unite my own co-operation and endeavors. I come, then, to thy feet, holy Virgin, as an altar of refuge and a place of asylum, and, prostrate before thee, I implore thine aid, I hope for it; and I have so much confidence in thee, that, if the affair of my eternal salvation depended solely on myself, I would leave it entirely in thy hands. I confess that, by my sins, I have rejected the succor thou didst obtain for me from heaven. I ask of thee, therefore, an augmentation of grace to vanquish my resistance; obtain for me that by a special favor of thy protection, I may second those graces to the best of my ability, and that I may not arrest their course by my own unfaithfulness. No one has ever invoked thine aid in vain. Shall I, then, be the first to ask it unsuccessfully? Be my advocate with thy divine Son, and I am sure of my salvation. My confidence in thee encourages me against all the efforts of the devil, the world, and the flesh. In that hope I will live and die. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, and following.

FOURTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as your model, and try to imitate her.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, Holy Virgin, model of virgins, model of purity, what an example dost thou not present for the practice of so sublime a virtue! Thou wert the first to consecrate thyself to the Lord by

a vow of inviolable virginity. I behold in thy train an infinite number of virgins, who, instructed by thine example, live in mortal bodies as though they were pure spirits. Touched by that ravishing sight, what should I not do to imitate that angelic purity! Nevertheless, I dare not lift my eyes to a model so pure and so holy as thou art. I would fear that a single glance of mine should offend thee; but let my tongue, at least, be allowed to address thee in this humble prayer, conceived in a heart truly contrite and broken with grief for its sins. A sinner covered with the stains of sin, and prostrate at the feet of the Mother of all purity, humbly entreats thee to obtain for him an abundance of tears capable of washing away all the faults of his past life; and to grant him, at the same time, the grace rather to die a thousand times than to sin again. Holy Virgin, should I fear that thou wilt not hear my prayer? No; my request is too conformable to the love thou hast for purity; for not only canst thou not avoid loving it, but thou canst not even abstain from being its protectress, as thou wert always its model. Grant, then, that I may be all my life the imitator of a virtue which was so precious to thee, and that I may one day have the happiness of seeing thee in that high degree of glory which thy love for purity has made thee attain. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, *et seq.*

FIFTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as the Queen of angels and of men, and place all your confidence in her.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, Queen of the universe, Queen of angels and of men! as daughter, mother, and spouse of the Most High, thou hast a right over all creatures; they are subject to thee, and owe thee the homage which subjects owe to their sovereign. I myself belong to thee by a thousand titles; but I am not satisfied to belong to thee only by virtue of thy general dominion. I wish to belong to thee in a particular manner, and by the free choice of my will. Behold me, then, at the foot of thy throne; I come personally to acknowledge thee as my sovereign mistress, by the homage which I pay thee. I desire that thou mayest doubly exercise over me that sovereignty which thou hast over all creatures. I wish, from this moment, to depend entirely and specially on thee. Dispose now of me, of my soul, my heart, and my mind; reign over my words and my affections; reign, in fine, over my whole being. All will be sweet and consoling to me, when it shall come from thy beneficent hand. Grant me, O powerful protectress, that, after the vicissitudes of this world, I may reach the abode of a blessed eternity, to glorify thee forever and ever. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, *et seq.*

SIXTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as your benefactress, and show your gratitude to her for the graces you have received from her.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, the most just punishment due to an ingrate is his being deprived of the benefits that have been heaped upon him. That punishment I deserved, because of my want of gratitude towards thee, my divine protectress, who hast enriched me with so many benefits; thou who hast so often looked with compassion upon my miseries; thou who hast succored me in so many painful circumstances of my life. How little have I profited by thy goodness! I deserved, I humbly confess, that thou shouldst forget me, and that thy mercy should interest itself for hearts less ungrateful than mine. Yes, behold what I have merited; but I have so great an idea of thy goodness, that I still hope thy maternal heart will not allow itself to be overcome by the hardness of mine. I hope that, for thy glory and that of thy divine Son, thou wilt act towards me in accordance with thy merciful dispositions, and not according to the infinite number of my ingrati- tudes. Shall a hope so well founded be without effect? No; it will not be so. Mother of mercy, dispenser of the divine graces, refuge of sinners, I present myself to thee, although the most miserable of creatures; hear the voice of him who calls upon thee to help him; extend thy charitable hand to raise up him who has fallen. Being the Mother of my divine Saviour, thou art also my tender Mother. In so much as I have deprived myself of all title to obtain thine aid, just so much do I find motives in thee not to abandon me. I promise thee that I will no more be ungrateful to thee, my kind benefactress. I will repair, as far as I possibly can, my past ingratitude, by an inviolable fidelity in profiting by thy

new benefits, so that I may one day sing in heaven the mercy which the Lord shall have granted me through thy beneficent and helpful hands, O my divine benefactress ! Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, *et seq*

SEVENTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as your liberatrix, and beseech her to deliver you from all evils, and especially from sin, which is the greatest of all.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, where should I now be if thou hadst not been so full of charity for me ? How canst thou bear with a heart which is touched neither by the benefits which thou hast conferred upon it, nor by the evils from which thou hast preserved it ? How often have I not seen myself on the brink of the precipice of hell ! And thou, my powerful benefactress, when the demon expected my soul but to fall into his hands, when divine justice was ready to pronounce the sentence of my condemnation, thou didst come to my assistance without my even thinking of imploring thine aid. In that danger, the very thought of which makes me shudder with horror, thou didst present to the eternal Father the wounds of thy divine Son, and to thy divine Son the chaste womb that bore him. Thou didst thus obtain grace for me at the terrible moment of my eternal death, when the least delay would have left me forever under the dominion of the infernal powers. And shall not so many signal favors on thy part suffice to pene-

trate my soul with the most lively gratitude, and lead me to consecrate all the moments of my life and all the affections of my heart to the service of my powerful liberatrix? Oh, yes, I consecrate myself to thee. I desire, O holy Virgin, that thou mayest have the glory of subduing the heart most rebellious to grace. I conjure thee to continue to be my liberator, my support, and my defence. Obtain for me deliverance from an evil greater than the pains of hell, which is sin. Thou hast delivered me from so many evils, finish thy work, which I am resolved to second in future with all my strength, and with a constant fidelity in discharging all my duties towards thee. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, *et seq.*

EIGHTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as your consoler; and have recourse to her in all your adversities.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, sovereign, powerful, and tender comfortress of the afflicted, what an admirable assemblage of perfections I find in thee—in the sublimity of thy rank, and in the tenderness of thy heart, and in the splendor of thy glory! Not only dost thou not forget the unhappy, but thy power becomes still more dear to thee because thou canst employ it in consoling and relieving them in their wants. Worldlings usually abandon their friends in the time of affliction; but thou, it is especially in the time of affliction that thou regardest us with a more favorable eye. Invoked

then, thou hastenest to our assistance, often even anticipatest our prayers; and in the most perilous moments of our life thou offerest us a secure haven under thy protection. Blessed be the hand of the Lord, who has rendered thee so powerful and so charitable, and has formed in thee the heart of the tenderest Mother and of the Queen most worthy our veneration! Divine Virgin, by so many titles which distinguish thee, disdain not that of my comfortress. Thou seest what are the afflictions of my life, the sufferings that I have to endure, the bitterness which I drain to the dregs. I implore thee not to cease for an instant to be my support and my consolation in the crosses with which I am laden, the temptations by which I am assailed, and all the other miseries by which I am surrounded. Obtain for me the grace to accept all in a spirit of resignation and in expiation of my sins, to satisfy the divine justice, so that I may one day merit the reward and the glory of the saints in heaven. Amen.

Antiphon, Litany, &c., p. 534, &c., as before.

NINTH DAY.

On this day honor Mary, conceived without sin, as the patroness of a good death; and pray to her, and beg of her to obtain for you a death like unto that of the Saints.

PRAYER.

O Mary, conceived without sin, holy Virgin, I know that I must one day die, and, perhaps, soon. If I ever needed thine assistance, it will especially be in those last moments when the enemies of my salvation will redouble their efforts to ruin my soul. All my life thou

hast honored me with thy protection, and loaded me with favors. Thou hast been my Mother, and, after God, my all. Abandon me not at my last hour, when I shall especially need thy help; earnestly, and with my whole heart, I ask it of thee. Come to my rescue at that hour; defend me from the assaults of the demon; sustain me in temptations, and in the anguish of my final combat; obtain for me patience in the pains of my last illness; grace to receive the sacraments with holy dispositions. Finally, the happiness of drawing my last breath in the peace of the Lord, and dying the precious death of the Saints. I do not merit it, after leading such a criminal life; but I hope it from thy bounty, and thy powerful intercession with God. It is with that intention that I now address to thee the prayer which the Church so often repeats, in the name of all the faithful. Holy Virgin, pray for us now, and at the hour of our death; then more than ever show that thou art our Mother. Deign to interest thyself for thy dying children. Receive, thyself, their souls into thy hands, to place them in those of their Creator. Amen.

(Here, on each day of the Novena, say the following prayers.)

ANTIPHON.

Thou art all fair, O Mary, and original sin is not in thee. Thou art the glory of Jerusalem—thou art the joy of Israel—thou art the honor of our people—thou art the advocate of sinners, O Mary! O Mary! most prudent Virgin! most clement Virgin! pray for us. Intercede for us with our Lord Jesus Christ.

LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God, the Holy Ghost, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity one God, *have mercy on us.*

HOLY MARY, conceived
without sin,

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of divine grace,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother most amiable,

Mother admirable,

Mother of our Creator,

Mother of our Redeemer,

Virgin most prudent,

Virgin most venerable,

Virgin most renowned,

Virgin most powerful,

Virgin most merciful,

Virgin most faithful,

Mirror of justice,

Seat of wisdom,

Cause of our joy,

Spiritual vessel,

Vessel of honor,

Vessel of singular devotion,

Mystical rose,

Tower of David,

Tower of ivory,

House of gold,

Ark of the Covenant,

Gate of heaven,

Morning star,

Health of the weak,

Refuge of sinners,

Comfortress of the afflicted,

Help of Christians,

Queen of angels,

Queen of patriarchs,

Queen of prophets,

Queen of apostles,

Queen of martyrs,

Queen of confessors,

Queen of virgins,

Queen of saints,

QUEEN, CONCEIVED WITHOUT

SIN,

Pray for us.

Pray for us.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, *spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, *hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us, O Lord.*

By the Immaculate Conception of the most pure Virgin, *Help us, O Lord,* in all our trials and afflictions.

LET US PRAY.

O God, who hast prepared, in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, a meet abiding place for thy Son, grant, we beseech thee, that as foreseeing the death of her Son, thou didst preserve her from all stain, we too may be permitted to attain to thee, made clean through her intercession. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Blessed forever be the most pure, most holy, and most Immaculate Conception of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

[Popes Gregory XV. and Benedict XIII. granted a hundred days' indulgence for the recital of this ejaculatory prayer.]

PRACTICES,

In honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

As there is no mystery of the most Holy Virgin, nor feast established in her honor, which is more agreeable to her than that of her Immaculate Conception, so it may also be said that there is none on which the Blessed Virgin is more liberal to those who celebrate it with fervor, and who have special devotion for that mystery. Be you of that number: cherish all your life a particular devotion to that Immaculate Conception; that is to say, let no day pass without your honoring the Blessed Virgin, as conceived without sin. Thank God every day for that singular privilege, that special grace which he bestowed on the Blessed Virgin. Have in your oratory, or in your chamber, an image of the Immaculate Conception. Salute it often during the day, with this short

ejaculation, "Hail Mary, conceived without sin." Inspire your children, your servants, your friends, every one around you, with that holy devotion. Celebrate that festival with more solemnity than the others; say every day the little office of the Immaculate Conception; you may easily recite it while hearing Mass.

Persons who cannot read may say two hundred and seventy Hail Marys in honor of the number of days during which that incomparable Virgin remained in the womb of her mother.

It has been remarked for many centuries, that there is no saint, no true servant of the Blessed Virgin, who has not had special devotion to her Immaculate Conception.

It is a pious practice very agreeable to the Mother of God, to clothe some poor girl in white in honor of this mystery. Another is, to celebrate the feast of it and its octave, on each of the eight days, saying some prayers, giving alms, or doing some other good work with that intention, and receiving holy communion as often as possible during that octave. If there be any church or chapel where the Virgin is particularly honored under the title of the Immaculate Conception, go there to offer up a prayer, once every day during the octave. The following prayer will answer the purpose. All these practices should be observed during the novenas made with the same intention.

PRAYER,

For the use of Persons who wear the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, commonly called the Miraculous Medal.

O Mary, name under which none need despair, and which fills with consolation all those who pronounce it

with love ! Virgin unspotted and all fair ! grant, I beseech thee, by the merits of thine Immaculate Conception, that my soul may be purified from the stains of sin, and that the infernal serpent, whose head thou didst crush, may no longer hold me enchained under his odious dominion. I cast myself, my kind Mother, with filial confidence, into thy maternal arms, which thou hast opened to press me lovingly to thy merciful bosom. Grant that those rays of pure and celestial light which proceed from thy blessed and holy hands, may ever lighten me in the ways of sanctification, and that their light may enable me to avoid the shoals which would prevent me from reaching the haven whose gate thou art; that the cross which shines before my eyes may become for me a sure pledge of salvation; and that by thine intercession I may obtain grace to bear with resignation all the troubles it may please God to send me in this valley of tears. The sight of the sacred heart of thy divine Son teaches me, by the thorns with which it is crowned, what happiness it is to suffer for Jesus Christ, and to suffer in a manner worthy of him. Let thine own heart, O Immaculate Mary, be a warning for me, by the lances with which it is pierced, that mine should be inflamed with the love of heavenly things, and detached from those of earth. Finally, that those two hearts, united, may be my refuge and my asylum during life, my defence and my strength at the moment of death, my happiness and glory throughout all eternity. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. Amen.

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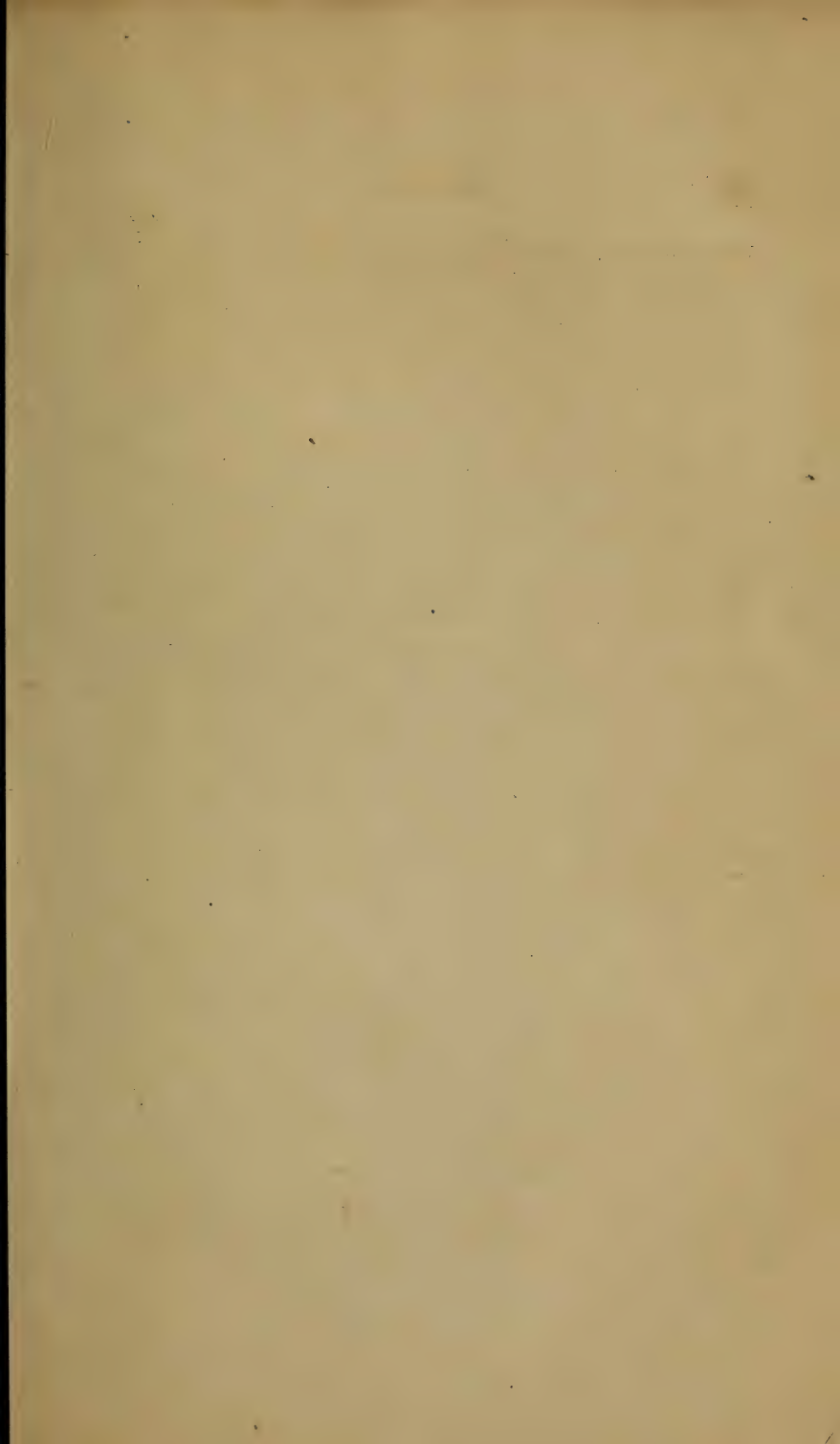
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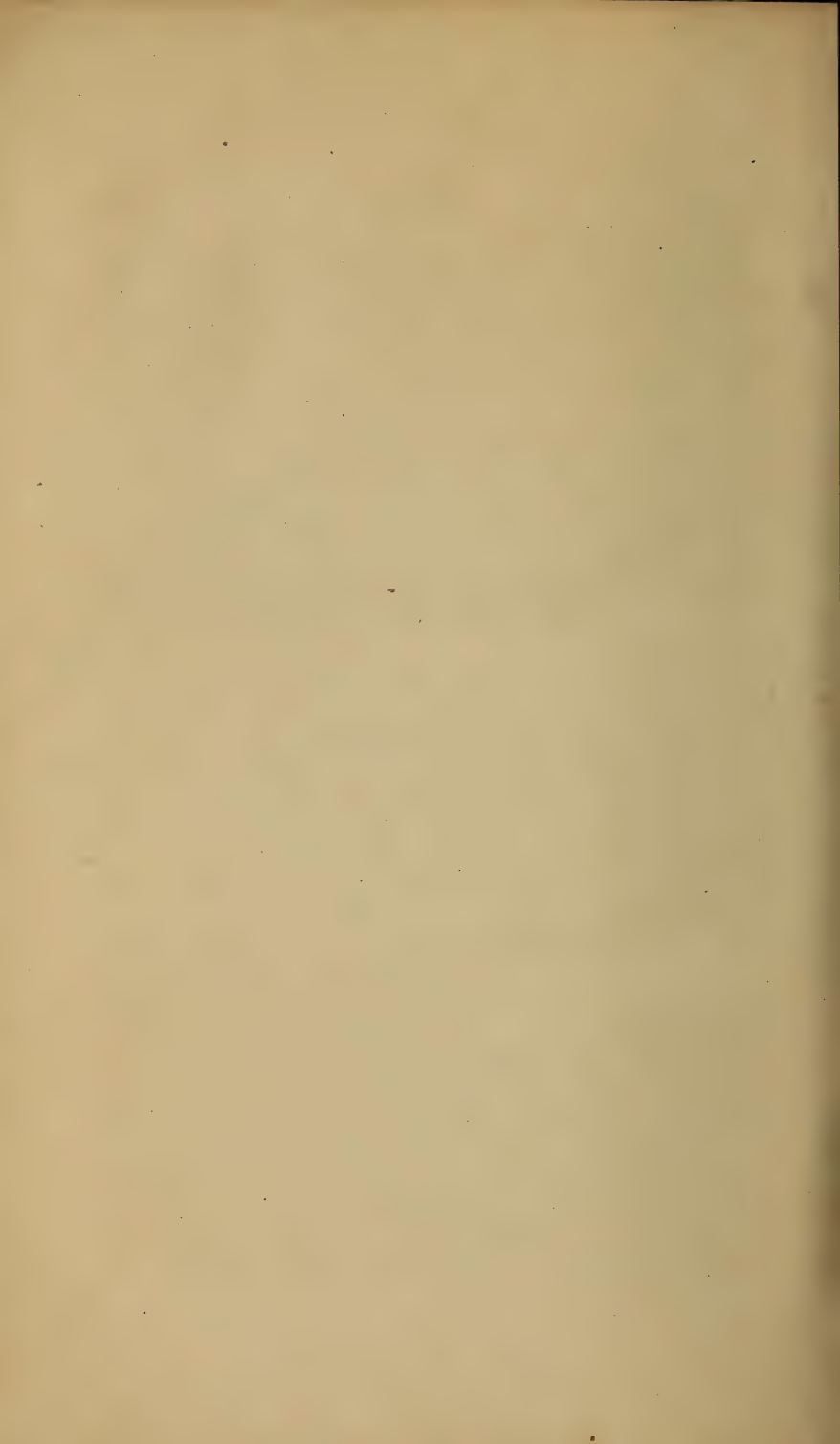
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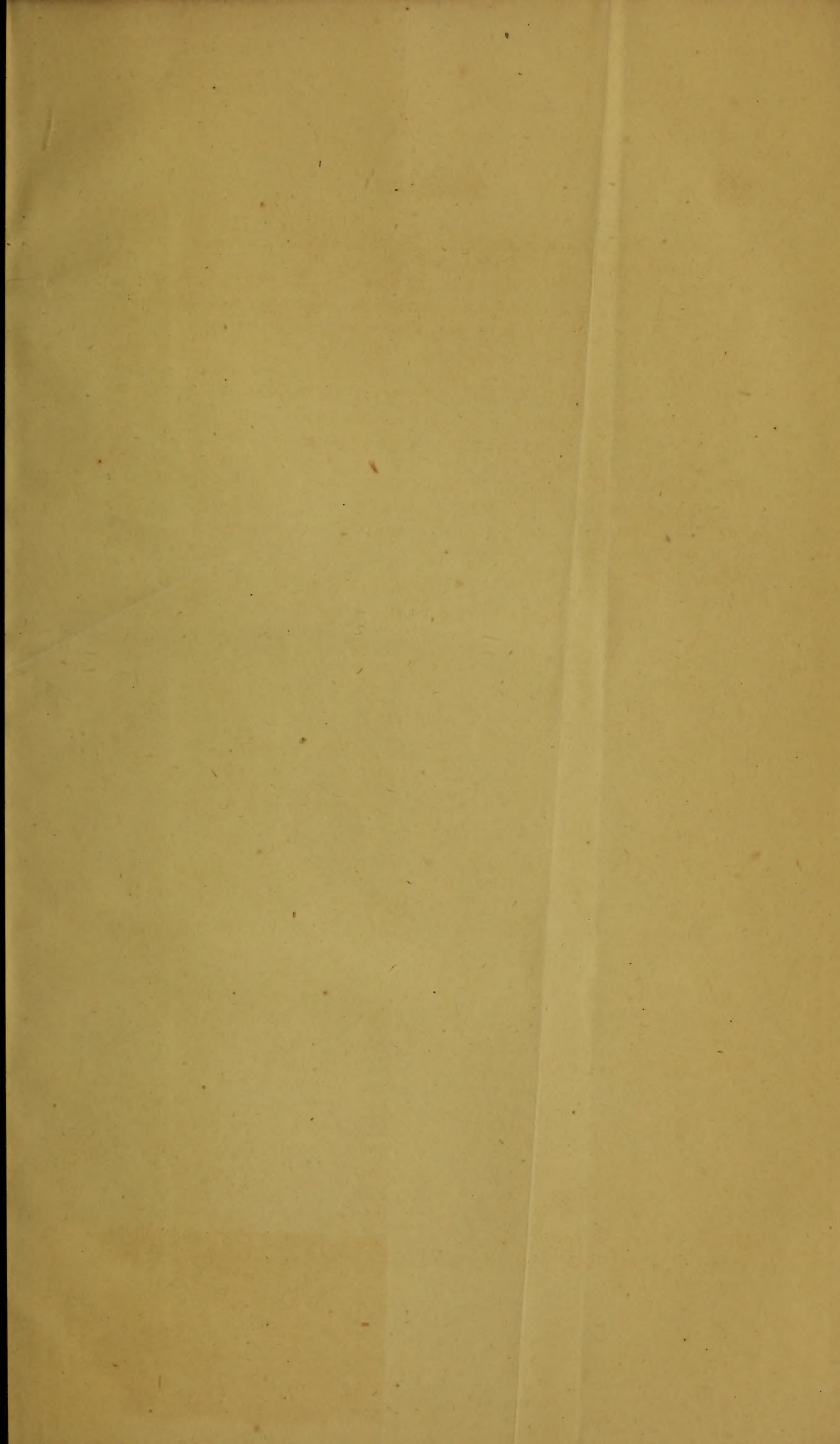
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